THE APPLICATION OF DERRIDA'S
IDEAS OF MOURNING AND DEFERRAL OF MEANING
TO
BRONTË'S *SHIRLEY* AND *VILLETTE*

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SAMINDOKHT RONAGHZADEH

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———————————————
Prof. Dr. Meliha Altunışık
Director

I certify that this thesis satisfies all the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.

———————————————
Prof. Dr. Wolf König
Head of Department

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.

———————————————
Assist Prof. Dr. Dürrin
Alpakın Martinez-Caro
Supervisor

Examining Committee Members

Assist Prof. Dr. Dürrin Alpakın Martinez-Caro (METU, ELIT) ———————

Assist Prof. Dr. Margaret Sönmez   (METU, ELIT) ———————

Instr. Dr. Barış Emre Alkım   (ATILIM U, T&I) ———————

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ABSTRACT

THE APPLICATION OF DERRIDA'S IDEAS OF MOURNING AND
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Ronaghzadeh, Samindokht

M.A., Department of Foreign Language Education

Supervisor: Assist. Prof. Dr. Dürrin Alpakın Martinez-Caro

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This thesis will try to carry out a Derridean approach to Charlotte Brontë's two last, important, and mature novels: *Shirley* and *Villette*. From among all Derridean concepts, the idea of deferral of meaning and mourning are chosen to be investigated through close reading of the selected novels. The aim is to make clear the unexplored thoughts, meanings and feelings found in Brontë's texts, using Derrida's philosophical ideas as a tool. Many interpretations will be exposed for the progression of the stories in *Shirley* and *Villette*, and for the nature of the characters, both men and women. This process will demonstrate the endless deferral of meaning and the way the characters mourn for the eternal absence of those they love. The thesis is not just about the deferral of Brontë's intended meaning, but also about the deferral of the meanings of all words and concepts which ultimately make the meaning unattainable or always absent.

Keywords: Meaning, Deferral, Death, Mourning, Character

ÖZ

DERRIDA'NIN YAS VE ANLAM ERTELEME FİKİRLERİNİ BRONTË'NİN *SHIRLEY* VE *VILLETTE* ÜZERİNDE UYGULAMASI

Ronaghzadeh, Samindokht

Master, İngiliz Edebiyatı

Danışman: Yrd. Doç. Dr. Dürrin Alpakın Martinez-Caro

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Bu tez, Charlotte Brontë'nin olgun dönemine ait son iki önemli romanı: *Shirley* ve *Villette*'i Derrida'nın yaklaşımıyla incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Derrida kavramlarının arasından, anlam erteleme ve matem kavramları bu tezin konusu olan romanları incelemek için seçilmiştir. Amaç, Derrida'nın felsefi fikirlerini araç olarak kullanarak, Brontë'nin metinlerinde bulunan keşfedilmemiş düşünceler, anlamlar ve duygularını açıklığa kavuşturmaktır. *Shirley* ve *Villette*'de olan hikâyelerin ilerlemesi için ve karakterlerin hem kadın ve hem erkek olmak üzere, doğası için birçok yorum sergilenecektir. Bu işlem, anlamın sonsuz olarak ertelenmesini ve karakterlerin sevdiklerinin ebedî yokluğu için nasıl yas tuttuklarını gösterecektir. Tez sadece Brontë'nin kasıtlı anlamını ertelemeyle ilgili olmayıp, aynı zamanda bütün kelimeler ve kavramların anlamını ertelemekle ilgilidir, ki bunun sonucu olarak da anlama ulaşılmaz ve her zaman anlam eksik kalmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Anlam, Erteleme, Ölüm, Yas, Karakter

To My Brother

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that Derrida is a major philosopher and we live in a Derridean epoch. His thinking has transformed the ways in which we see the world, life, death and their meanings more than any other contemporary philosopher or writer. His ideas are new, important and necessary to think about. Since literature is and has always been in close relation with philosophy, the appearance of new philosophical ideas has never distanced, but rather reattached, us to literature and literary texts. Literature for Derrida, as he declared, has always been "the most interesting thing in the world, maybe more interesting than the world" and many of his writings are responses to drama, poetry and fiction (*This Strange Institution Called Literature* 47).

By studying Derrida and his responses to a wide range of literary works, I have tried to conduct a Derridean approach to the two mature novels, *Shirley* and *Villette*, which are partly based on Charlotte Brontë's own real experiences. Two of Derrida's philosophical concepts are selected for the purpose: the ideas of Deferral of Meaning and Mourning.

In the first half of the 19th century within a house in the village of Howarth in West Yorkshire the powerful novel writer, Charlotte Brontë, lived. Her short life did not hinder her from producing masterpieces in literature. Her novels were celebrated by the Victorian readers and critics, though they were rather different from what was common at that time: *Shirley* contained violence, riot, an ambitious and an independent woman character, free action, hard work and

perseverance, depression, desires, passionate emotions and emotional distance. *Villette* with its characters' double identities, obscure endings, deceiving narrator, a plain female protagonist, night terrors, double love, death, cruelty and suffering, was not the kind of novel commonly written in her day.

Brontë courageously sketched real life in general and what it can do to us in terms of what she had herself experienced:

> Brontë's larger aim was to speak, not of her particular life, but of life in general, perhaps of aspects of life which she was peculiarly fitted through her experiences to understand, aspects not commonly dealt with in the fiction of her day (Minogue XV).

The above mentioned aspects, especially a plain but eager and hardworking woman (Lucy Snowe) at the centre of a story, desiring two men at the same time but relying on neither for support, disturbed and made the writers, critics and readers of Brontë uncomfortable. Minogue briefly referred to these features of *Villette* as follows:

> Its daring 'double love' [which] raised the eyebrows of contemporaries; its dwelling on male beauty and female desire; its blurring of male and female lines . . .; its placing of the woman, and a plain woman at that, at the centre of her own story, her satisfaction dependent on the absence of a man rather than his presence, and on the presence of work rather than its absence; its sense of the abyss yawning below the social inanities of existence. These qualities made many of Brontë's contemporaries uncomfortable _ especially the men (XVIII).

As it is well-known, Brontë's early life could not be considered happy with the death of her mother when she was only five. Her attendance at the Clergy Daughters' School in Cowan Bridge had also been a great hardship for her, which affected her later health and weakened her body. The most terrible disasters of her life came while

writing *Shirley* between 1848 and 1849; her only brother and two of her sisters died. Brontë was probably in a shock while working on *Shirley* and still mourning and suffering while writing *Villette* in 1852.

Brontë's publisher, George Smith, and his colleague criticized her last novels, especially *Villette*, for being uninteresting and without any excitement in the first chapters. Brontë defended her own "particular brand of realism against the rather more conventional expectations" of it and she made no alterations (Minogue XV). She retained the grimy and bitter realism of her novels against their objections since that was what life had displayed to her in reality. It could be speculated that it had been hard for Brontë at that time to imagine a happier and a brighter life. Her novels are also full of characters who dream of and long for happier lives but the author preferred to write a doubtful and somehow disturbing ending for *Villette*. Making resemblances between *Villette* and a pale palette she mentioned: ". . . my palette affords no brighter tints; were I to attempt to deepen the reds, or burnish the yellows, I should but botch" (qtd in Minogue XV).

She continued her response to George Smith and his colleague's criticism of the course of the painful romance in *Villette* and lack of any clear union and happy ending, as follows: "The spirit of romance would have indicated another course, far more flowery and inviting . . . but this would have been unlike life, inconsistent with truth — at variance with probability" (qtd in Minogue XVI).

She leaves the picture of "union and a happy succeeding life" only for those who have "sunny imaginations" (*Villette* 462). For Brontë the true picture of a course of love within a real and an ordinary social world was most probably like what happened in *Villette* between Lucy and M. Paul. Brontë dispatched M. Paul to an ambiguous fate, the storm. She wrote the final passages in such a way that, although the

wording is carefully unclear, the readers' interpretations are guided more towards the tragic ending than the happy one. Most scholars understand that M. Paul never comes back and Lucy never tastes a completely happy life with him. Here is, for example, Fraser's interpretation:

Fraser is certain about Brontë's intention to write an unhappy ending for *Villette*. She believes that her father played a major part in the uncertainty of M. Paul's fate, since he disagreed with such a tragic ending. After Brontë finished *Villette*, "her father, to whom she had read some passages, was partly responsible for its enigmatic finale. He could not bear a sad ending, and in the first version M. Paul had died in the shipwreck" (Fraser 426). Although Brontë withheld a "sunny" closure, the ambiguity can also indicate that she did not believe it to be impossible and left the readers with some other choices:

1. M. Paul may one day come back and they live happily ever after; 2. He may not come back but Lucy may have a very satisfactory life without him depending only on the presence of her work; 3. There is even a possibility that with M. Paul's return and in his presence Lucy could not be happy and their marriage would be an unsuccessful one. This undecidability of meaning followed by its deferral is what Derrida has always talked about in relation to written texts.

We may consider meaning as very much related to the notion of truth. However, the problem of meaning for Derrida has always been different from that of truth. The most important reason is that in traditional metaphysics, truth was conceived as "something objective which could retrieve the lost unity in the world and could provide the absolute response for all the problems of men" (Ahmadi, *Truth and Beauty* 10). For Derrida, nothing is certain or can be known in an absolute and objective sense, and he replaced the traditional word

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'truth' with the notion of 'meaning' or, better, 'meanings' and 'interpretations'.

Derrida emphasizes that meaning is always deferred; he makes no distinction between the spoken language and the written language since both when we speak and when we write, the meaning conveyed exceeds, or is different from our intended meaning(s). Meaning, for Derrida, has a changeable nature and there is no way to reach a final and controllable meaning of a written text by reading it, regardless of its form or genre. Derrida says in *'Living On'* that "no context permits saturation, . . . it is constantly caught up in a process that it does not control" (81).

The meaning, such as it is, however, exists within the context and not outside it: "No meaning can be determined out of context" (*Living On* 81); but Derrida does not regard it as a unique and decidable meaning and rejects any claim for a single and true meaning that can be derived from contexts. His focus has always been on the undecidable and inexhaustible aspects of meaning. Derrida thus demonstrates how extraordinarily inventive and meaningful languages can be; indeed any language tries to "reinvent invention" (*Psyche* 60).

Language is always playing with us and this playing and freedom to play is dangerous. It is not, as Derrida confessed, "simply playing" in a childish way but actually it can be a "very risky" game when we are unaware of its dangers (*The Ear of the Other* 69). Play is both an essential part of language and what makes it seem anomalous. This means that the freedom and playfulness of language are natural but at the same time cause many problems, make the meaning deferred or absent, and create an insecure atmosphere. Derrida believed that, in order to get a sense of this 'play',

> [We should think about it as] not simply in the sense of the ludic, but also in the sense of that which, by the spacing between the pieces of an apparatus, allows for movement and articulation – which is to say, for history, for better or for worse. This play is sometimes what allows the machine to function normally, but sometimes the same word designates an articulation that is too loose, without rigor, the cause of an anomaly or a pathological malfunctioning (*This Strange Institution Called Literature* 64).

Here is an example of deferred meaning or a playful sentence as presented by Nicholas Royle. He quotes two simple words by Derrida: "Be free" (Royle 31). On the one hand and on the first reading, these two words provide us with the sense that we can do anything we like. On the other hand and on a second reading, we can think of these simple words as an order or even a warning, in which case, we can only be free as long as we obey the rules of being free as dictated by the one who has given the order. We are not free enough to do everything; the freedom given is a ruled and a lawful one. Royle explains the situation as follows:

> As an order, 'be free' tells you to be what you cannot be except in obeying this order: to obey the order to 'be free' is not to be free. You are free to do anything as long as you accept that you are not free to disobey what I am hereby ordering you (31).

Derrida's peculiar interest in literature arises from the fact that the deferral of meaning, playfulness and freedom to be found within literary texts are serious and strange ones. Every and all meaning is inside the text but it is impossible to determine the true one since none of them are completely correct or incorrect; Brontë's novels are useful examples of this. We read about Brontë's thoughts through her writings but we find the intention(s) and meaning(s) of her texts undecipherable. Royle expresses Derrida's view of literature as follows:

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Literature has no definitive meaning or resting place, even if it allows one to explore notions of 'definitive meaning' and 'resting place' in especially critical and productive ways. The literary work never rests. It does not belong. Literature does not come home: it is strangely homeless, strangely free (Royle 45).

Hidden endings and deferred meanings are also present in the novel *Shirley*. Brontë has narrated the fates of the characters of her story in the last chapter but most of them are not without suspicion and uncertainty. For example, the main characters' final marriages (Louis Moore to Shirley Keeldar and Robert Moore to Caroline Helstone) may seem to be happy unions, but the shadow of death is already present in their life. Shirley was bitten by a mad dog and it is possible that she "will be seized with hydrophobia and die raving mad" (*Shirley* 380).

Robert Moore was once shot by a desperate, unemployed man and his machinery was smashed by violent rioters. Since he has plans to turn the green country into a smoky mill yard in the near future, it would not be surprising if a second murderous act were to follow. Shirley and Robert both feel and are aware of the danger of death being near and this is what Derrida believes the nature of death and mourning for the dead is about.

When it comes to 'Mourning', what first strikes the mind is the question, why is Derrida so deeply concerned with death and mourning? Why do these preoccupations run through all his writings? The simple answer may be that Derrida believes the threat of death to be lurking everywhere and every time in our lives. Everything we do is tinted with death; each moment of our lives is being followed by the fear of death and mourning for the dead. He asserted in an interview in 1995: "I think about nothing but death, I think about it all the time, ten

seconds don't go by without the imminence of the thing being there" (*I Have a Taste for the Secret* 88).

Each particular name even carries this death-threat; while uttering a name, it is a dead man's name we are addressing or when looking at a picture, the subject can be already dead or sooner or later he will be dead and we will be mourning for him/her. As Derrida remarked: "The name, to be distinguished from the bearer, is always and a priori a dead man's name, a name of death" (*The Ear of the Other* 7).

Derrida's extreme interest in death and mourning is not to say that he did not appreciate life. On the contrary, he valued life so much that he even did not believe in an afterlife: "I do not believe that one lives on post-mortem" (*I Have a Taste for the Secret* 88). Death and life were not opposites for Derrida since he saw death as a strange natural part at the very heart of life.

As mortals we should also recognize the momentous existence of death in the way our lives go on, in our thoughts and desires and we should not try to get rid of these thoughts and desires, but rather learn how to live with them (*Specters of Marx* xvii-xviii). Derrida knew that it is hard for us to imagine ourselves as being dead some day or even being alive forever. We know that we are not able to live on but at the same time we do not accept death. As Derrida declared: "we will never believe either in death or immortality" (*Mémoires: for Paul de Man* 21).

We are just like ghosts living on earth: Derrida believed what we live is a ghost's life; each one of us lives like a ghost since the shadow of death is and has always been above us from the moment we are born. We see the death of those we love, our family members and our friends, and for now we have survived to bury them and mourn for them, but each day may bring our turn to leave and the others, who have survived, will mourn for us and commemorate us. That one must

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always go or die before the other is the first law of mourning, as Derrida points in his work *Politics of Friendship*; to survive means to mourn. Derrida maintained that the "absolute certainty . . . is that one must die before the other. . . . It is impossible that we should each survive the other" (*Aphorism Countertime* 422).

In order to have some background information, the next chapter (Theoretical Background) will deal with realism, postmodernism and the difficulty or impossibility of determining a fixed meaning. It will also give a brief account of Derrida's unusual passions and interests.

It is necessary to know about Derrida himself and his important critical ideas including 'Mourning' and 'Deferral of Meaning' which are going to be studied in detail within the third chapter. The language Derrida uses is sophisticated. He has made literary language penetrate into philosophical language; this is what makes his works difficult to understand, and a whole chapter is needed to explain the expressions that will be used in this thesis. Each of his ideas is somehow related to the others; each concept leads to the next, and in order to understand a concept, we have to know about the earlier ones.

Chapter four belongs to Charlotte Brontë herself. I will concentrate on those parts of her life that have relevance to my Derridean analysis and on her real experiences which have somehow played an important role in the writing of the novels, *Shirley* and *Villette*.

Within *Shirley* and *Villette*, the representations and reflexes of Derrida's ideas will be sought. *Shirley* and *Villette* contain many examples of Derrida's philosophical ideas of Mourning and Deferral of Meaning. The relevance of these ideas to the novels is going to be analyzed within the last two chapters of this thesis (the fifth and sixth chapters).

My survey of literature has revealed that there is no easily available study in this nature anywhere. I hope that this type of study, which is believed to be an unexplored area in literature, will be useful for the readers. I should also mention that Nicholas Royle in his 2003 work, *Jacques Derrida*, has a part called, Brontë and the Experience of the Impossible, in which he deals with the connection between Derrida's ideas about the uncanny and meaning, and some haunting and powerful verbs in Emily Brontë's romantic novel, *Wuthering Heights* (1847).

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In order to have some background information, it is better first to meditate on postmodernism, its characteristics and some historical concepts which hint indirectly at postmodernism or have many affinities to it. What effective role has Derrida played in the change, difference and innovation created by postmodernism? How can Derrida's philosophical ideas find counterparts within some Victorian novels? And how is meaning deferred in the realistic mode of a Victorian novel? These are some of the questions to be answered in this chapter.

Postmodernism is made up of two sections: the preface 'post' and the base 'modernism'. Postmodernism follows modernism; it can be considered as both separated from modernism and a part of a continuous line starting with modernism: "Whether postmodernism represents a sharp break from modernity or simply a late stage in that historical development is the crux of the matter" (Crawford 150).

Postmodernism contains the name of modernism within itself. It can be looked upon by some scholars as modernism taken to its extremes. As Terry Eagleton explains, "postmodernist itself means not just that you have left modernism definitely behind, but that you have worked your way through it to a position still deeply marked by it" (viii).

It cannot be denied that postmodernism has adopted an anti-realist stance and rejects some modernist ways of thinking, along with the "Enlightenment quest for rational explanations and knowledge" (Crawford 150). Here is Eagleton's description:

> Postmodernism as a style of thought . . . is against all
> Enlightenment norms and sees the world as contingent,

ungrounded, diverse, unstable and indeterminate. Postmodernism views the world as a set of disunified cultures which produce skepticism about the objectivity of truth, history, norms and coherence of identities (vii).

Postmodernist ideas also involve the rejection of the totalising explanations of reality offered by Marxism, Capitalism, Liberalism, Freudianism, the monotheistic religions as conventionally followed and so on. Following Jean-François Lyotard, these total explanations are often called "grand narratives" or "meta-narratives". For Lyotard what characterizes postmodernity is a skepticism or incredulity towards all narratives which claim to be the ultimate grounds of explanation; meta-narratives claim to encompass everything and explain everything:

> Knowledge within these meta-narratives is 'legitimated' not objectively but by rules that are internal to its 'language game'. So-called knowledge is associated with power and is used to oppress and control rather that to liberate. Lyotard prefers 'small narratives' in which individuals can participate actively and effectively (qtd in Jackson 10).

Derrida was also completely in accordance with his contemporary good friend Lyotard. In an interview, for example, he said that the "well documented", "consistent" biographies "written by people who have authority in the academy" and which for centuries even "after the death of an author" represent the whole truth, are unreal. He believes the "more over-real" biographer to be the one who reads only a "tiny paragraph" and interprets it in a "rigorous", "inventive" and "powerfully deciphering fashion". This biographer knows much more than "the one who knows the whole story" (*Derrida* film by Doe).

Modernism accepted the social world as being "fragmentary" and "transient" but still struggled to change this world and overcome its lost unity. However, postmodernism has contently acknowledged and even

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celebrated the lack of a center and ground. Postmodernism, as Crawford mentions, "rejects deep structures, any notion of an underlying, determining reality. It accepts a world of appearances, a surface reality without depth" (150).

Derrida and other postmodern philosophers question the very bases of any kind of certainty: Who sets them? When? Where? Why? In postmodernist terms, all knowledge is constructed; everything is made up of other things and nothing is fixed. Nothing can be known in an absolute and objective sense: "The essence of postmodernism is the making of anything from anything else" (Crawford 150). Derridean approaches have also a strong tendency to be eclectic, diverse, playful and creative, and to gather beliefs from various sources and combine different meanings. Here is how Eagleton explains this aspect of postmodernism:

> Postmodernism . . . reflects change in a depthless, decentred, ungrounded, self- reflexive, playful, derivative, eclectic, pluralistic art. . . . postmodernism is such a portmanteau phenomenon that anything you assert of one piece of it is almost bound to be untrue of another (vii-viii).

Scholars cannot agree upon one clear and definite meaning of postmodernism. This "semantic instability" is also attributed to postmodernism as a result of its resemblance to, or close connection with other unstable and debatable terms such as Victorianism, modernism, avant-gardism, and so on. Not only "semantic instability" but also "historical instability" is attributed to postmodernism; its history like the history of many other literary concepts is open to change. A complete distinction between for example Romanticism, Victorianism, modernism and postmodernism cannot be made, since their histories are mingled with and permeated into each other (Waugh 96).

Our postmodern era inherits some elements from Victorianism and Modernism. Modernism itself has some affinities to Romanticism, Romanticism to the Enlightenment, Enlightenment to the Renaissance and so on; they can never be totally separated. Although the term postmodernism carries within itself "the theory of innovation, novation, renovation or simply the idea of change" (Waugh 98), the kind of change and difference that postmodernism implies is the combination of Darwinian, Freudian, Marxist, and finally Derridean kinds. This "double view" is and has always been at work within the process of change in the history. According to Ihab Hassan, a "period" is both "continuous" and "discontinuous". It means that periods both complete each other and depart from each other. They are marked by being both "conjunctive" and "disjunctive" (qtd in Waugh 97).

This can be considered a Derridean view, since he strictly believed that sameness and difference, unity and separation were not opposites but always functioning together. The concepts of speech and writing, the inside and outside of a context, determinable meanings and indeterminate meanings, repetition and difference, life and death, reality and fiction, exist for Derrida deep within the heart of each other and are incessantly moving with each other in the world. He believed that there is a "strange logic" in the world that "brings together identity and difference, differing and deferring, repetition and otherness" (Royle 80).

Derrida seriously attacked Western metaphysics which was overwhelmed by binaries. Derrida believed "the Western philosophers had created the binaries themselves, but had called them truth" (qtd in Ahmadi, *Truth and Beauty* 485). These binary oppositions were not accepted by Derrida. He always aimed at overcoming the conceptual

oppositions of metaphysical thinking and its established and closed systems:

> Derrida never only used the numbers 0 and 1; all the digits between 0 and 100 were important for him. Black and white were not the only existed colours; Derrida was in love with all the innumerable colours. Sameness and difference, singular and plural, negation and affirmation, possibility and impossibility, male and female, life and death, light and darkness existed together for Derrida (Ahmadi, *Structure and Deferral of Meaning* 10).

He believed that they functioned within the same machine and neither ever preceded or came before the other, but in the Western metaphysics, each side of a binary indicated the absence of the other side. For example writing was about absence, the absence of the speaker, and so speech was privileged.

Derrida seriously believed all men and especially the philosophers should "reconsider all the pairs of opposites on which philosophy is constructed and on which our discourse lives" (*Différance* 11). The oppositions such as speech/writing, theory/practice, signifier/signified, word/world, form/substance, presence/absence, true/false, body/soul, inside/outside, and so forth had taken a very dominant place within the history of Western metaphysics. As Derrida argued, it had been Plato's idea to give priority to speech over writing and this caused the ambiguous binary oppositions to be created:

> It is not enough to say that writing is conceived out of this or that series of oppositions. Plato thinks of writing, and tries to comprehend it, to dominate it, on the basis of opposition as such. In order for these contrary values (good/evil, true/false, essence/appearance, inside, outside, etc.) to be in opposition, each of these
>
> terms must be simply external to the other, which means that one of these oppositions (the opposition

between inside and outside) must already be accredited as the matrix of all possible opposition (*Dissemination* 103).

As mentioned in the Introduction, the occasion of each person's death is different from others. It is unique and happening for the first and last time; for example by the deaths of our mother or father we lose each once and forever and there is no other mother or father to die. The occasion of death is, however, repeated over and over. During our life we experience the deaths of our friends and family members and the same feeling of loss, agony, depression, loneliness and mourning is repeated for each unique and unrepeatable loss.

Derrida insists that the same two-fold situation is true about the concept of text and meaning. The context both contains the meaning and makes it imperceptible; the meaning is both present and absent from the text. As Derrida affirms: "No meaning can be determined out of context, but no context permits saturation" (*Living On* 81). The meanings and secrets are within the text and though the text is in front of us and we have the opportunity to read as many times as we want, the text makes the meaning deferred and inaccessible for us; on each reading we encounter new meanings. Derrida calls this situation: "the unreadability of the text" (*Given Time* 152).

He has defined the unreadability of the text, which is an important law of reading and writing, as "the impossibility of acceding to its proper significance and its possibly inconsistent content, which it jealously keeps back" (*Before the Law* 211). The text keeps the meaning back, incomprehensible, inaccessible and impossible to be fully revealed.

Derrida believes this unreadability of meaning(s) is something positive about the text since the readability of the text depends on it;

we cannot read, understand and interpret the text if it does not make itself unreadable for us, or defer and hide its meanings from us. Derrida wrote in *Given Time*: "the readability of the text is structured by the unreadability of the secret" (152). Inaccessibility of meanings make the reader think and meditate more about the text and the reading is not finished when the reader discovers the first meaning or intention of the author. This unreadability is not only appropriated by the reader, but also by the author.

The moment that a writer creates a literary work, it is unique, singular and owned by its author; but as soon as the reader starts reading it, the work and its singularity is pluralized and the text no longer belongs just to its author. Each work is singular but cannot remain singular since this singularity is divided, pluralized and repeated as a result of every reading of that work:

> An absolute, absolutely pure singularity, . . . would not be available for reading. To become readable, it has to be *divided*, to *participate* and *belong*. . . . Singularity differs from itself, it is deferred so as to be what it is and to be repeated in its very singularity (*This Strange Institution Called Literature* 68).

Each time a unique work of literature is read, another singular new work with different meanings is born. Everyone reads while thinking or feeling in his/her own way and according to his/her previous experiences. Royle describes Derrida's argument about singularity as follows:

> Every literary work is singular, and every reading of such a work is singular. . . . Everyone writes – and reads – differently, in their own, singular fashion. . . .
>
> Everyone has their own way of doing, thinking, feeling or experiencing things: it may be a question of how you choose to pose – or how you find yourself posing – for a photograph (119-120).

Derrida has summarized this unique situation in just one sentence in his autobiographical work *Circumfession*: "It only happens to me" (305). Encountering a new text with different meanings is what happens to each new reader. The newly created work after being read can no longer be appropriated, not by the author, nor by any other reader:

> Derrida's concern is with a notion of the work (in particular a work of literature or philosophy) as an 'irreplaceable singularity' which entwines the readable and the unreadable and thus comes to figure a 'singular impropriety' that cannot be appropriated by anyone, whether reader or presumed author (Royle 132).

Derrida never questioned the uniqueness without which a literary work is no longer valuable, but believed that this singularity should contain plurality within itself. He expressed that an "absolutely pure singularity . . . would not be available for reading" unless a singular _for example, sentence, novel or philosophical treatise_ participates in "the genre, the type, the context, meaning, the conceptual generality of meaning" (*This Strange Institution Called Literature* 68).

This is the proof of the "democratic nature" of literature; it is free to bear any and as much meaning as it can, being always at the same time irreplaceably singular and unique. As Derrida stressed enthusiastically:

> Literature is a modern invention, inscribed in conventions and institutions which . . . [secure] in principle its right to say everything. Literature thus ties its destiny . . . to the space of democratic freedom (freedom of the press, freedom of speech, etc.). No democracy without literature, no literature without democracy (*Passions: "An Oblique Offering"* 23).

Derridean postmodernism with its features such as meaning being open and disjunctive, playful, chanceful, anarchic, deconstructionist,

against interpretation, imminent, indeterminate and ghostly began deeply affecting all the dimensions of our lives. A particular model of imagination was shaped and some affinities or connections with the new postmodern model began to be found in various authors. In literature the works of our ancestor writers were reread and reinvented or rediscovered, as a result of being analyzed in terms of the new ideas.

Shirley and *Villette* contain the life stories of simple but powerful, independent and passionate women. Lucy Snowe is not actually the weak character described on the surface level of the novel; the rhetoric of the narrator provides such a false impression of Lucy. She does not allow her identity to be shaped only by the accidents of birth. She is at first nobody, only an invisible being on the margins of society but she decides to face her fears and at last she is able to be somebody, owns a school, makes herself loved and becomes less invisible. All these happen while we can never know if her lover will return or has died in a shipwreck.

Shirley Keelder is a good example of "a woman of independent means and lively disposition who enjoys the freedom to act as she wishes" (*Shirley* Intro). However, the extended dialogues between her and her future husband indirectly expose some weakness in her personality. Caroline Helstone is a depiction of the Victorian's ideal woman: patient, kind and wise, but is she the true heroine since Shirley's personality is tainted with some kind of a defect? A perfect image of a strong-willed, determined, self-confident and dutiful woman or wife is shown by the character of Mrs. Yorke whose husband was not even permitted "to have any friend in the world beside herself" (*Shirley* 112). She cared a lot about her husband and children and looked after

them without any expectation or objection. Besides these qualities, she was strict, solemn and stubborn:

> She was a strong-minded woman; never said a weak or a trite thing; took stern, democratic views of society, and rather cynical ones of human nature; considered herself perfect and safe, and the rest of the world all wrong (*Shirley* 113).

As the last part of this introductory chapter, reality and its varying nature will be discussed.

Formal realism in the novel is generally considered to start in the early 18th century with Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and to develop throughout the century. Balzac summarized the "encompassing motto" of the realists at the beginning of *Le Père Goriot* in this sentence: "All is true" (Furst 2).

Realism was the production of what was going on during its time, "a revolt against Classicism and Romanticism" (both idealizing life) (Furst 1). The works of the classicists show life as more rational and orderly than that it really is, while the Romanticists' works show life as more exciting and satisfying than what it normally is.

Social realism turned its back on the ideals and fantasies of romanticism and others, reporting life in detail; a life affected by scientific and industrial developments and social and political changes of its time. An increasing number of readers were expecting a scientific understanding of their social problems. As a result, social realism grew popular.

In the 19th century, the Industrial Revolution peaked and its developments changed the social and economic atmosphere of, especially, England because of its being the "first industrialized country" (Haqiqi 20-21). Urban centers and factories were in some places taking place of the farmlands and affecting even rural and provincial life: The

railroads opened first in England in the 1820s, steamships improved, transportation increased, gas lighting spread, and electric telegraph came into operation in 1837.

All these changes made the life of the middle classes more comfortable. The population increased exceptionally and a consciousness became widespread. Most people could afford books and papers in the mid-19th century and literacy continually increased down to the poorest of society.

As the factory owners (industrialists) were getting wealthier, many factory workers were living desperately in a wretched condition and their families and children were suffering in hunger. Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848), Dickens' *Hard Times* (1854) and many other realistic novels clearly portray the working conditions during the 19th century, especially the Hungry Forties.

Shirley was written between 1848 and 1849 which was a time of social and political unrest in England. Though this novel was placed in the latter part of the Napoleonic Wars, Brontë designed it as a social novel dealing with not only the character of Shirley, a woman of independent means, but also with the character of Robert Moore, a passionate, opportunistic, modernizing mill-owner. The angry mob, who had killed one of the mill-owners, were considered a threat to the rest of them.

The important thing for social realists was the truth about commonplace and ordinary lives of the middle classes and lower classes. "Truthfulness" became "the motto of the most [*sic*] of the writers" and "simplicity, being direct and using no artistic adornments" was seen as approximating truthfulness, though we should note that realism is by no means a simple or artless form (Haqiqi 25). Both formal and social realism, with all its complexities, has always tried to cling to

its most important purpose of conveying to the reader a strong sense that what he/she reads is actual in experience.

Villette and *Shirley* as realistic novels treat their subjects with seriousness so that the reader feels that all the facts presented in the narrative may perhaps happen in his/her own life or at least could have happened to some people (such as Charlotte Brontë herself). Brontë has described many details of setting and character, and has created complex characters. Brontë, as a true realist, never mixed her subjects with the ideals she could have had in mind. She depicted people and scenes just as they really were for her and did not idealize human nature.

The realists were not totally objective and absent in their writings. Brontë has been particularly famous for her authorial intrusions and her presence in her novels can clearly be felt by readers, especially when she reminds them of this fact time to time:

> If you think, from this prelude, that anything like a romance is preparing for you, reader, you never were more mistaken. . . .Calm your expectations; reduce them to a lowly standard. Something real, cool, and solid lies before you (*Shirley* p.3).

When the narrator intrudes into the story, his/her presence makes us somehow aware of the fictionality of what we read. Intrusions of the main narrator are actually frequent in the novels of 18th and 19th centuries and *Shirley* and *Villette* are not exceptions. Brontë addresses her readers many times along her stories.

Shirley self-consciously draws attention to the acts of reading and writing. The novel displays ostentatiously its own artificiality by making many references to it. For example we read in *Shirley*: "You must not think, reader, that in sketching Miss Ainley's character I depict a figment of imagination. No. We seek the originals of such portraits in

real life only" (140). The act of addressing the "reader" is overtly repeated in the novel. Even the last paragraph makes reference to the novel as being just a 'story': "The story is told. I think I now see the judicious reader putting on his spectacles to look for the moral" (*Shirley* 482).

In *Villette*, from the beginning to the end the writer who is also the subjective narrator, consistently efforts to convey a sense of the fictional world to us. Here for example she makes reference to the act of writing: "Religious reader, you will preach to me a long sermon about what I have just written, and so will you, moralist: and you, stern sage: you, stoic, . . . each and all, take it your own way" (*Villette* 143).

The author has used her peculiar style, the nature of the characters and what happens to them in order that the reader can be aware of the dramatic quality of the story: "Do not fancy, reader, that there was any inconsistency in the priest's presence at this fête. This was not considered a show of Vanity Fair, but a commemoration of patriotic sacrifice" (*Villette* 430).

Reality has a continually changing nature; it is absolutely not something fixed. True reality in a work of art cannot be owned and appropriated by anyone, neither the author nor the reader; it exists always within the process of change. The reality of a piece of work is born when it is read, but any different reader, as already mentioned, gives birth to a different reality. Derrida's declarations are affirmed by Chiari who clearly explained:

> Reality is something whose meaning varies, and that
>
> also applies to works of art: for although they retain the identity of the material of which they are made, and although, once created, they *are*, they only exist as works of art while they are apprehended by a human consciousness. A poem unread is nothing more than

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paper with some ink characters on it, and if it is placed in appropriate climatic conditions it might retain so for thousands of years; but it only exists as a poem when it is felt to be so by a reader, and there are as many experiences or durations as there are readers (23).

Lepore defines what Donald Davidson perceives as the doctrine of the 'Relativity of Truth' as follows: Relativity of Truth is "the doctrine that what is true (or so) according to, or relative to, one scheme may not be true (or so) according to another" (305). Relativism (or, rather, conceptual relativism) in this sense is connected to plurality and multiplicity; it can even be considered as the same as "the idea of a *multiplicity* of points of view on a common world" (Lepore 308). It does not convey that for instance a sentence which is true from the point of view of one conceptual scheme is false from the point of view of another scheme; rather it means that the sentence has a different meaning, while retaining its previous meaning.

Postmodernism is radically 'relativistic' with regard to knowledge and truth. In spite of this, the idea of truth stands at the very center of the postmodern challenge. The recent way of understanding truth and its meaning within the new world we live in, which has emerged through postmodernism, implies that there can be no absolute truth; truth is inherently plural. Lepore quotes from Davidson who describes this 'Truth' as follows: "Truth is relative to nothing except what fixes meaning and the world. . . . Where truth varies while the world does not, meaning must vary as well" (321).

Derrida would have agreed with Salman Rushdie's argument that "objective truth" is "the unattainable goal for which one must struggle in spite of the impossibility of success" (qtd in Crawford 24). The meaning is always absent but this absence or our continually unsuccessful struggle to attain truth has also a positive consequence:

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the possibility of delivering the most plausible explanations and interpretations. Heidegger's and Nietzsche's key notion is presented by Mark Blitz as follows (Heidegger and Nietzsche were two of Derrida's inspiring figures):

"All truth, including mathematically based science, is merely interpretation" (Blitz 78). To read means to understand and to understand does not mean to achieve the truth but to interpret the truth.

CHAPTER III

DERRIDA'S LIFE AS A THINKER

Jacques Derrida was born on 15th of July 1930 in a Sephardic Jewish family in El-Biar, a district in South Algiers. He studied philosophy in the École normale supérieure, under the guidance of the French philosopher, Jean Hyppolite, who was an expert in Hegelian and Marxian philosophies.

When he was only 11 years old, Derrida was deprived of his state education as a result of the anti-Semitism practiced by the Vichy government. This painful situation continued until 1943 when the new French regime reinstated citizenship for the country's Jews and Jacques was allowed to return to his school.

This harsh experience of discrimination or being an unwanted foreigner in his own country had a deep effect on Derrida and his studying and education. It made him feel "hatred and cynicism towards anything religious, racial or ethnic" (Fakhri). He decided not to go to the university and dreamed of becoming a football player, an actor or even a car driver.

In spite of this, by the end of the 1940s, Derrida found himself inclined towards philosophy and literature. The most common literary and philosophical attitudes of that time were Surrealism and Existentialism, especially associated with Heidegger, Camus and Sartre. Derrida's curiosity became more and more engaged by Nietzsche, Freud, Husserl, and Heidegger. Though he was reading and writing about his interested subject, philosophy, he also craved for literature

and literary writing. Derrida always vacillated between these two institutions:

> It is true that my interest in literature, diaries, journals in general, also signified a typical, stereotypical revolt against the family. My passion for Nietzche, Rousseau, and also Gide, whom I read a lot at that time, meant among other things: "Families, I hate you." I thought of literature as the end of the family, and of the society it represented. . . . Literature, or a certain promise of "being able to say everything," was in any case the outline of what was calling me or signaling to me in the situation I was living in at that time, familial and social (*This Strange Institution Called Literature* 39).

Derrida failed the entrance examination to the École normale supérieure twice. In 1952, however, he at last gained admission to this prestigious institution and there he got acquainted with Louis Althusser, the famous French Marxist philosopher and Derrida's later inspiration in life. The best and most remarkable generation of philosophers and thinkers including Roland Barthes, Paul De Man, Gilles Deleuze, Jean-François Lyotard, Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Jacques Lacan, Maurice Blanchot, and Emmanuel Levinas had come of age. There are a number of impressive pieces Derrida wrote expressing his grief after the death of these philosophers, with whom he had shaped a close friendship.

Although Derrida studied philosophy and is known to be a philosopher, he never produced a thorough or an absolute philosophical work. His compositions were mostly literary in style, but displaying philosophical viewpoints. By criticizing philosophy, Derrida made the distinctions between it and literature, as two separate institutions, insecure:

> Derrida made philosophy penetrate into all other sections such as art, literature, psychoanalysis, architecture, culture, law and politics. So it turned out

that racism, national identity, feministic activities, apartheid and many other systems also passed through philosophy and vice versa (Fakhri).

Derrida and his philosophical ideas were not much acknowledged or respected in France. He found as many or even more opponents than adherents; there were many headstrong opponents both inside and outside France. Derrida's name became more associated with 'Postmodernism' and 'Post-structuralism'. He had demonstrated not a full but a partial commitment to Structuralism but somehow criticized its deficiencies. He was labeled a postmodern commentator who inaugurated post-structuralism. As Fakhri declared in her newspaper article:

> Post-structuralism inaugurated in 1967 with the publication of Derrida's three outstanding books called *Speech and Phenomena*, *Writing and Difference*, and *Of Grammatology*. Then other philosophers such as Pierre-Félix Guattari [the French militant philosopher trained by Jacques Lacan], and Gilles Deleuze [the French philosopher collaborated with Guattari] accompanied him in his research.

Actually, Derrida introduced his own idea of post-structuralism in language by rejecting Husserl's notion about the phenomenology of language and his basic conceptions such as sign, center, presence, truth, structure and so on. Derrida, instead, propounded some general perceptions for post-structuralism such as language play, absence, difference, decentralizing and his key idea, Deconstruction.

Deconstruction is the last and most dangerous literary-philosophical method or technique of analyzing subjective texts; it makes a target out of the heart of traditional philosophy. Derrida produced a nicely aphoristic expression in an interview in 1985: "Deconstruction . . . is a coming-to-terms with literature" (*Deconstruction in America*, an interview).

On the one hand, there were many for whom Derrida's thoughts were of utmost power and importance. On the other hand, he had many opponents who severely questioned his perceptions and believed them to be incorrect, pungent, destructive, offensive and absurd: "They accused Derrida of complication, deceit and fraud. He was not a respected philosopher in their eyes but a treacherous magician, whose improper and superficial ideas threatened philosophy and corrupted the enlightened societ" (Fakhri).

The opponents conceived Deconstruction as confusing nonsense and Derrida as the one who had given the postmodern philosophy of France a bad name. The reason for these critics' harsh judgments was the fact that Derrida's thoughts and writings did not have the necessary explicitness of the scientific views. The truth is, however, what Royle states emphatically about Derrida:

> There is nothing vague or impressionistic about his work. His concern is to respond to a text or situation with the utmost rigour and clarity. If we are to talk in terms of his 'ideas', key or otherwise, these ideas are in the world, changing the world (Royle 17).

The critics believed that Derrida's works, with their considerable obscurity and complications, were almost useless for inexperienced and unprofessional readers. There were even professional readers who could not fully comprehend Derrida's writings since they were very profound, bombastic, miscellaneous, and abounding with language play; any kind of coming to a conclusion about Derrida's ideas is almost impossible.

This impossibility of obtaining any fixed meaning or conclusion is what Derrida always has referred to in relation to any written text: "there is no literature without a suspended relation to meaning and reference" (*This Strange Institution Called Literature* 48). He did not

consider anything readable unless it was "structurally liberated from any living meaning" (*Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles/Eperons* 131).

The device with which he wrote philosophy was literature while he always viewed literature philosophically. Derrida's criticism of philosophy was an unusual one since he did not use current expressions. He neither strictly rejected nor fully committed himself to any attitude.

As a result, everything he said was grounded in doubt and suspicion; no last and fixed conclusion can be made from his writings. Despite the difficulty and destructive quality of his writings, they are at the same time very subtle, witty, and extraordinarily inventive and exact.

Derrida's best friend Roland Barthes died in an accident in 1980 and it influenced Derrida so much that he wrote a piece of mourning after his death. *Mémoires: for Paul de Man* of Derrida was published in 1986. This book is about his affectionate and moving friendship with Paul and the humanistic experience he had by his friend's death.

In 1993, with Geoffrey Bennington's help, Derrida composed Sartre's confessions; the volume was called *Circumfession*. He also published *Aporias*; this time Derrida explicitly wrote about his most favorite, most thought-out subject, 'Death', the shadow of which had always been present till then in all his works.

III.I Living Perfectly Well
and
Ignoring Derrida's Critical Ideas

Jacques Derrida had been one of the most prolific of recent philosophers. By reading Derrida we come to know not only the thoughts of the ancient philosophers and literary men, but also about the strange and secretive world we live in. What Derrida wrote, as Leslie Hill expresses, "constitutes one of the essential events in the history of modern thought" (viii).

Derrida, the famous French philosopher and the father of one of the most powerful movements of our century, deconstructionism, challenged the most primary human thoughts and perceptions. His multi-dimensional mind was occupied with philosophical and literary thinking. His personality was also characterized by different dimensions: being both an amusingly childish philosopher and a very "scrupulous", mysterious and discriminating deep thinker: "Derrida seeks to be 'exceedingly scrupulous and exceedingly serious' (*Limited Inc a b c* 65), but he is also a very funny writer: this is one of the things that some people evidently find infuriating about him" (Royle 28).

Being a "Derrida reader" is a difficult task since this philosopher, as Hill expressed, "places demands on his readers". His writings are mostly "elliptical" and complicated. The readers should be somehow familiar with the well-known western philosophers such as "Plato, Kant, and Hegel to Husserl, Freud, and Heidegger" and their main tenets (Hill vii). Not only philosophy but also literature played a great role in the formation of his deep intellectual thoughts. Moreover, the ways he

exploited the French language made his writings somehow untranslatable.

All these factors have made Derrida's writings dense and difficult to understand, but the most significant characteristic of his work is that it "challenges readers to rethink many inherited assumptions, up to and including those governing the basis on which thought, writing, language occur at all" (Hill vii). Reading Derrida make us attentive toward small things in our lives and lets us see them in a new light. He demonstrated how philosophy can be about our everyday life and about the both trivial and important activities we perform or think about all day.

Speech and writing are what create the different situations in our lives more than our actions. Even actions gain meaning only when they are described and interpreted by our written or spoken words. Derrida's basic belief was that our wordings and their meanings are hard to be controlled, so that the situations created are almost always unreliable and unstable. In writing and speaking, authors or communicators definitely have stable meanings in mind which they might seek to impose upon their texts, but it is impossible to be able to control the many numerous meanings and different interpretations that the spoken word or the written text create. Plato believed this fact to be true only about the written word but Derrida accused also speech of this impossible stability. Here is David Mikics' explanation:

> Our words are drifting, uncontrollable: once they leave our mouths, they take on a life of their own. Speech, Derrida asserted, is not so different from writing. Plato called the written word an orphan. . . . Writing wanders ceaselessly. . . . Derrida, went further than Plato, arguing that not just writing, but speech, is a homeless drifter (xii).

Here we encounter one of Derrida's most influential attitudes: Skepticism.

What our words and senses give evidence of may not be in accordance with how the things really are in the world; our access to reality is constantly deferred by language. We start to lose our trust in words since we are not able to prove that they are absolutely true. Derrida also took another more influential intellectual step which was a "departure from his rigorous method of doubting everything" (Mikics xiii). What he really desired was to get rid of the limitations of absolute skepticism; he was impatiently expecting a just world containing purposeful meanings.

In order to combat skepticism, Derrida followed the course of his good religious friend Emmanuel Lévinas and searched for something that, "could rise above psychology and confront humanity in its most stark and urgent dimensions. Derrida became, like Lévinas, a voice for justice" (Mikics xiii) and committed his life to promoting it. Almost everything he wrote and said, including his Deconstructionism, was for the purpose of preventing violence and rendering social justice.

Can there be any philosophy unrelated to psychology and biography? How convincing can philosophy be without demonstrating any living and tangible examples of life and existence? Derrida also became aware of this issue and perceived that biography or the emotional and personal life of a thinker is something inseparable from his/her intellectual life. Singular beings were so important for Derrida and he became, as Royle maintained, "fascinated by the enigmatic nature of autobiography, by the question of survival or 'living on' " (7).

The other more tempting feature of autobiography for Derrida was its secrecy; as he declared: "The autobiographical is the locus of the secret" (*I Have a Taste for the Secret* 57). Derrida was captivated by anything secretive, such as life, death, writing, and autobiography.

Autobiography was one of Derrida's experiences of the impossible or undeterminable. He believed it impossible to be able to know the truth about one's life, but he always felt obliged to talk about personal lives and existence.

III.II What Does Derrida Mean

By

Deferral of Meaning?

Structuralists followed Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistics and believed that:

> All human knowledge including language and writing are closed and analyzable systems which are equipped with a knowable center or a clearly defined underlying structure. . . . This center is immune to the play of language and makes definite meanings attainable for us (Nojoumian 50).

In such a model of language, we can have specific, systematic texts with exact and determinable conclusions. Post-structuralists did not have this confidence in language; they believed that "all the distinguishable structures and meanings are just an external false appearance" (Nojoumian 52).

In analyzing the structure of a text, structuralists searched for the center which would convey the truth or provide the meaning. The centred reading was traditionally based on just the author or the author's meaning or massage. After New Criticism it became the entirety of the text itself and the meaning it was meant to create.

The traditional Western philosophy placed the author as the absolute author(ity) and the reader as the interpreter of the text, which accord with the author's intended meaning. Roland Barthes decentred the author and shattered these notions of authority (by his famous phrase: the death of the author). Barthes empowered the reader and described a text as plural and its interpretation as a collaborative work between the author and the reader:

> A text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue...but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader. . . . Classical criticism has never paid any attention to the reader...the writer is the only person in literature…it is necessary to overthrow the myth: the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author (Barthes, *The Death of the Author* 148).

Here is Royle's explanation of Barthes' popular phrase, 'the death of the author':

> The time has come to stop reading texts in terms of authorial intention or what we think the author meant by such and such a statement. We must stop referring the source of meaning and authority of a text back to its author (a God-like father-figure), Barthes declares (7).

The extraordinary point for Derrida about the traditional concept of 'centre' was that it was always immune or free from any analyses. Derrida, in *Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences* (1966), pointed to this as the problem with structuralism, a movement that considers the 'centre' of a meaningful structure to guarantee 'presence'. Centre, for Derrida, was actually what both made the meaning present and prevented it from functioning freely:

> Structure . . ., has always been neutralized or reduced, and this by a process of giving it a center or referring it

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to a point of presence, a fixed origin. The function of this center was not only to orient, balance, and organize the structure . . . but above all to make sure that the organizing principle of the structure would limit what we might call the *freeplay* of the structure (qtd in Natoli & Hutcheon 223-4).

Without having a centre, a structure was even "unthinkable". Structures were being analyzed by referring to this "fixed origin", whereas the centre itself was always immune from analysis: "At the center, the permutation or the transformation of elements . . . is forbidden" (Derrida qtd in Natoli & Hutcheon 224). By using the structuralists' own definition of centre, Derrida intelligently proved that what they conceived of was not totally correct and complete.

Although the centre is said to be within a structure, its being safe and immune on the one hand, and the whole model's changeable nature on the other hand, decentres the center. The result is that, as Derrida pointed out, "the center is not the center". Here is the extract:

It has always been thought that the center, which is by definition unique, constituted that very thing within a structure which governs the structure, while escaping structurality. This is why classical thought concerning structure could say that the center is, paradoxically, *within* the structure and *outside* it. The center is at the center of the totality, and yet, since the center does not belong to the totality (is not part of the totality), the totality *has its center elsewhere*. The center is not the center. The concept of centered structure . . . is contradictorily coherent (qtd in Natoli & Hutcheon 224).

In this way, Derrida decentred the center. He called centredness in the structure of language 'logocentrism' and defined it as "the centrism of language in general" (*I Have a Taste for the Secret* 77) or the privileged position attributed to logos or speech in the Western tradition. Logos is "ancient Greek for 'word', with all its connotations of the authority of 'truth', 'meaning', etc." (Royle 15). Derrida criticized the

existence of a perceived unity between 'truth' and 'meaning' in language.

What Derrida conceived of as the 'essence' of language differed from Saussure. He disagreed with Saussure's logocentric determination and called it "an ideal explicitly directing a functioning which . . . is never completely phonetic". Saussure's idea resulted from following his understanding of the ancient philosophers, Plato and Aristotle, who had limited 'writing' to or had defined it as "the model of phonetic script and the language of words" (*Of Grammatology* 30). Derrida quotes Aristotle's and Saussure's definitions of speech and writing as follows:

> Let us recall the Aristotelian definition: 'Spoken words are the symbols of mental experience and written words are the symbols of spoken words'. Saussure: 'Language and writing are two distinct systems of signs; the second *exists for the sole purpose of representing* the first' (*Of Grammatology* 30).

Saussure believed that speaking was primary and writing was secondary or just a form of speaking: "He connected speech to the presence of meaning and writing to the absence of meaning" (Nojoumian 55). Writing was a representation or in other words writing represented speaking and speaking represented our thinking; then writing was doubly far from presence. Writing was supposed to be subordinated and exterior to language and speech: "Writing will be . . . the outside, the exterior representation of language" (*Of Grammatology* 31); "writing is 'image' and exterior 'figuration' " (*Of Grammatology* 35). Here Derrida unmasked the power of writing by introducing this so called 'subordinated external image' as not being as "innocent" as it seemed to be:

> This 'representation' is not innocent. The outside bears with the inside a relationship that is, as usual, anything but simple exteriority. The meaning of the outside was

always present within the inside, imprisoned outside the outside, and vice versa (*Of Grammatology* 35).

The structuralists prevented the "written form" from functioning freely and imprisoned it within their strict notion of logocentricism. They considered writing to be a dangerous, a "tyrannical" and "enslaving" "passion" (*Of Grammatology* 38). This belief distanced them from 'writing' (their main object of investigation in linguistics). As Derrida stated:

> This logocentrism, this *epoch* of the full speech, has always placed in parenthesis, *suspended,* and suppressed for essential reasons, all free reflection on the origin and status of writing. . . .It is this logocentrism which, limiting the internal system of language in general by a bad abstraction, prevents Saussure and the majority of his successors from determining fully and explicitly that which is called 'the integral and concrete object of linguistics' (*Of Grammatology* 43).

Derrida rejected the superiority of speech over writing; neither of them can overcome absence since they are generally based on it. Every written or spoken word refers to something which is absent. We always have to use signs to explain what we mean and we can never find a sign that refers only to itself. The meaning is deferred since instead of uttering it directly, we can just give signals which refer infinitely to other ones. As Derrida stated:

> The sign represents the present in its absence. It takes the place of the present. When we cannot grasp or show the thing, state the present, the being-present, when the present cannot be presented, we signify, we go through the detour of the sign. We take or give signs. We signal. The sign, in this sense, is deferred presence (*Difference* 11).

There has always been this gap between what we utter or write and what is present even if the thing we utter is actually there. Here is Derrida's exclamation:

> One writes in order to communicate something to those who are absent. The absence of the sender, the addressor, from the marks that he abandons, which are cut off from him and continue to produce effects beyond his presence and beyond the present actuality of his meaning, that is, beyond his life itself, this absence, . . . belongs to the structure of all writing . . . of all language in general (*Margins of Philosophy* 313).

If the writer of the letter and even its reader die, others can read it and interpret it. As Derrida said, the written text "must be repeatable _iterable_ in the absolute absence of the addressee (*Margins of Philosophy* 315). Writing goes beyond the life of the writer and functions eternally:

> For the written to be the written, it must continue to 'act' and to be legible even if what is called the author of the writing no longer answers for what he has written, for what he seems to have signed, whether he is provisionally absent, or if he is dead (*Margins of Philosophy* 316).

As a result, what Derrida conceived of as 'writing' or 'original text' was different from what it conventionally meant for others. Text, for Derrida, meant much more than a 'physical body' or just a piece of paper with words written on it; an original text survives its creator. Derrida explained:

> A text is original insofar as it is a thing, not to be confused with an organic or a physical body, but a thing, let us say, of the mind, meant to survive the death of the author or the signatory, and to be above or beyond the physical corpus of the text, and so on. The structure of the original text is survival (*The Ear of the Other* 121).

The notion of text carried a kind of ghostly and mysterious sense for Derrida. He saw it as full of unknown and endless marks and traces. Here is Royle's comment: "Text comprises an effect of traces and remnants, marked by a ghostly logic of death and survival (or 'living on')" (64).

Texts, for Derrida, were chains of traces; these traces always referred to some other traces and this function is never finished. The written text was not an enclosed and limited system for Derrida as for the others. It was completely free to refer to anything or bear any meaning. Even those supposed to be opposites of writing such as speech, truth, and reality were actually caught up and imprisoned within this infinite system. Derrida elaborated this notion of his as follows:

> A 'text' is henceforth no longer a finished corpus of writing, some content enclosed in a book or its margins, but a differential network, a fabric of traces referring endlessly to something other than itself, to other differential traces. Thus the text overruns all the limits assigned to it so far . . ., everything that was to be set up in opposition to writing (speech, life, the world, the real, history, and what not, every field of reference – to body or mind, conscious or unconscious, politics, economics, and so forth) (*Living On* 84).

We can understand from this explanation that a written text can never be wholly present and clear for us and Derrida's idea of deferral as typical of the written, reinforces the idea that the meaning of a certain text is never present and that a critic can never entirely capture it. Truth and meaning are always deferred and remain imperceptible.

This also indicates that meaning is neither present nor absent; it is within the 'text' or better to say within the 'context' but we are only able to follow the traces of it and uselessly hope that one day we will

find it: "No meaning can be determined out of context, but no context permits saturation" (Derrida, *Living On* 81).

What we search for is continually deferred, but from where has this verb 'to defer' come into Derrida's vocabulary? The answer is from the important notion of 'Differance'. The pronunciation is the same as Difference but Derrida changed the spelling from 'e' to 'a' deliberately to emphasize that the spoken word is usually ambiguous and in order to understand the word, we need to refer to its written form. The spoken word is at a distance from clarity since it requires the written to be able to function properly. This new word was the combination of the two notions: 'to differ' and 'to defer'. Derrida described in *Speech and Phenomena*: "Differance is to be conceived prior to the separation between deferring as delay and differing as the active work of difference" (88).

In simple words we can state that when we speak and write or it is better to say when we give and take signs (Derrida called it: the movement of signification) no meaning is produced unless our signs signify some different meanings related to the past or future meanings of our signs. In the notable essay of 1968, *Difference*, Derrida wrote his most focused account of this word:

> Differance is what makes the movement of signification possible only if each so-called 'present' element, each element appearing on the scene of presence, is related to something other than itself, thereby keeping within itself the mark of a past element, and already letting itself be vitiated by the mark of its relation to the future element, this trace being related no less to what is called the future than to what is called the past (13).

These sentences seem confusing and difficult to comprehend and in spite of the all explanations made for them, they will remain so. Here are Royle's two short explanations: "Differance is what makes presence

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possible while at the same time making it differ from itself" (71); "Differance is the 'concept' of what makes concepts possible" (76).

The signals which are, as Derrida affirmed, "put in the place of . . . the present thing, 'thing' here standing equally for meaning or referent" (*Difference* 11), summon forth meaning only when they carry some traces of themselves in the past or are weakened by their transformed future forms. The present form of the sign is completely different from its past and future versions while at the same time keeps a relation with them; each sign both depends on the other ones and is an independent thing: "*Différance* is the systematic play of differences, of the traces of differences, of the spacing by means of which elements are related to each other" (*Positions* 21).

In following chains of signs, we continually loose the present meaning and find a new one which is again related to a new and different meaning (just like looking up a word in the dictionary). This movement seems to be an endless one. Derrida called this situation 'Differance' which both presents the meaning and defers it forever or continually postpones our perception. Here is an extended explanation by Derrida:

> [Deferral is] the detour and postponement by means of which intuition, perception, consummation - in a word, the relationship to the present, the reference to a present reality, to a being - are always deferred. . . .
> It confirms that the subject, and first of all the conscious and speaking subject, depends upon the system of differences and the movement of différance, that the subject is not present, . . . , that the subject is constituted only in being divided from itself, in becoming space, in temporizing, in deferral (*Positions* 28-30).

Difference and deferral separate the present from actually being itself and divide it into pieces. The present thing or meaning can no

more keep its power since the quality of it is impaired, weakened and near to die by the past and the future. Traces are what just remained of the present: "In order to be what it is, a text is an essentially vitiated, impure, open, haunted thing, consisting of traces and traces of traces: no text is purely present" (Royle 78).

Derrida provided us with a good example of 'difference': preparing a shopping list. We may think at first that a shopping list is the clearest, simplest, most perceptible and closed form of writing but Differance begins to function from the very moment we sit to compile our list and makes the meanings split, deferred, and differed from themselves. Derrida wrote: " 'I' make a shopping list, ... The sender of the shopping list is not the same as the receiver, even if they bear the same name and are endowed with the identity of a single ego" (*Limited Inc a b c* 49).

We believe by writing a shopping list we try not to forget the things we should buy; for Derrida, to write did not mean to remember the things we have in our present mind but to get distanced from this presence. Edgar Allan Poe made an ironic statement: "If you wish to forget anything on the spot, make a note that this thing is to be remembered" (qtd in Royle 77).

We make a list since we know that the identity of the receiver of the list is different from its sender (even if we are both the receiver and sender). Our list expresses many things other than what we had in our mind while writing it. When we enter a supermarket with our written list in our hands, we are no longer the same person who has written it. If we were completely certain about the content of our shopping list, we would not even have felt the need to write it. As Derrida exposed:

> Were this self-identity or self-presence as certain as all that, the very idea of a shopping list would be rather superfluous or at least the product of a curious

compulsion. Why would I bother about a shopping list if the presence of sender to receiver were so certain? (*Limited Inc a b c* 49).

Our shopping list, like many other texts, carries 'repeatability' within itself. It means that each word of it is open to many possibilities, such as the possibility of death. We can recall Derrida who argued in *Signature Event Context*: "[a] writing that is not structurally readable – iterable– beyond the death of the addressee would not be writing" (7). We may have an accident on our way to the supermarket and then our list should be read and understood by another person who carries the possibility of his own sudden death. These possible deaths are related both to the past and future and "thanks to which it is possible for the shopping list to remain readable, whether or not you manage to make it to the shop" (Royle 78).

Our list is detached from us or its own originality at the moment we finish writing it and functions endlessly and differently for everyone. Here is what Derrida stated: "The break [cutting off from its putative production or 'origin'] intervenes from the moment that there is a mark, at once" (*Limited Inc a b c* 53).

No text including our shopping list can ever be purely present to us. No text can exhibit clearly all its possible innumerable meanings. Truth is always deferred, postponed and our mysterious world will continue offering, each one of us, many possibilities of different thinking so that we can get close to but never reach to the only truth.

III.III Mourning, the Secret Condition of All Living and Thinking

When we open our eyes into this world, our death is born with our life. Death and life may be considered as different entities but there is only a very thin line between them which does not divide or separate but brings them even closer to each other. Derrida did not regard death and life as opposites; for him they moved along each other in the same world and depended upon each other.

Derrida believed all life to be based on death, without which living and thinking would be impossible and vain: "His abiding focus is on the question of the strangeness of 'death' not as the opposite of life, but rather as something at the very heart of life, as the very condition of thinking and desire, of learning how to live (Royle 7). And here are Derrida's own words: "Life does not go without death, and death is not beyond, outside of life. . . . They both share, apparently like you and me, an unconditional preference for the living body." (*Specters of Marx* 176-7).

The threat of death is always lurking in our lives and in the lives of our families and friends. Each day we might lose someone we love and we be left to mourn and bury them. In the Introduction to *The Work of Mourning*, Brault and Nass have explained Derrida's first rule of mourning:

> One must always go before the other. In the *Politics of Friendship*, Jacques Derrida demonstrates that this is the law of . . . mourning. . . . one of the two would see the other die, and so, surviving, would be left to bury, to commemorate, and to mourn (1).

For now, we, as mortal beings, are still alive but not forever since death is already waiting for us. Derrida stated: "It will always be

necessary that still living mortals bury the already dead living. The dead have never buried anyone" (*Specters of Marx* 143).

Derrida witnessed the death of his brother, mother and many of his friends and colleagues. He buried and commemorated them. When in 1980 he lost one of his best friends, Roland Barthes, Derrida produced a text of mourning for him: *The Deaths of Roland Barthes*.

He delivered a long lecture after the death of his most prominent friend in his intellectual life, Paul de Man, and three years later (in 1986) he reproduced this lecture as a book called: *Memoires for Paul de Man*.

Derrida composed in 1993 an autobiographical work entitled *Circumfession* in which he focused on his ill mother who was near death and could not recognize him.

By 2000, Derrida had responded to the deaths of fourteen close friends and colleagues of his. These responses, written in memory of his friends, their lives, work and relationships with Derrida, resembled each other though Derrida every time tried to dedicate a special and incomparable piece of mourning; each one of his friends represented a completely "unique" and "singular" being for him. These fourteen very personal texts were gathered into one volume, *The Work of Mourning*, in 2001. Brault and Naas described this volume as follows:

> Over the past couple of decades, Derrida has . . . , been called upon to respond at a determined time and place to an unrepeatable event_ the death of a friend. Each time this has occurred, Derrida has tried to bear witness to the singularity of a friendship, to the absolute uniqueness of his relationship with a friend . . . . Each time , he has tried to respond to a singular
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> event, a unique occasion, with words fit for the friend . . . while these texts were not originally destined to share the same space, they have come to resemble a sort of corpus within the corpus of Derrida (2).

The central point of his texts, Derrida made clear from the first essay. He demonstrated how singular each occasion of death is for us, how this singular event (death) is pluralized and repeated and how we actually betray the one we lose by repeating the same rite and codes of mourning:

> From the very first of these essays, *The Deaths of Roland Barthes*, written in 1981, Derrida has been concerned with the relationship between the singularity of death and its inevitable repetition, . . . with the inevitable repetition and betrayal that each (death) represents in relation to the others (Brault and Naas 2).

When the other is gone, what we lose is a singular being and a unique relationship. Nobody else in the world can replace or fill the emptiness we feel because the other has left. Roland Barthes wrote his last book, *Camera Lucida* (published in 1980) in memory of his mother whose death brought an inexpressible misery into his whole life. In this book he confessed:

> What I have lost is not a Figure (the Mother), but a being; and not a being, but a *quality* (a soul): not the indispensable, but the irreplaceable. I could live without the Mother (as we all do, sooner or later); but what life remained would be absolutely and entirely *unqualifiable* (without quality) (Barthes, *Camera Lucida* 75).

The sadness we feel is so deep that we may first prefer to keep silent. It hurts to speak, but we have to "break the silence"; we should cry, mourn and talk about his/her goodness and kindness since not to speak and to keep our eyes dry will even hurt and make us suffer more. We do this for all those we love and all those who were close to us but who are no longer with us. Derrida started his elegy for Gilles Deleuze with the following words which showed his grief: "So much to say, and I don't have the heart for it today" (*The Work of Mourning* 192).

Derrida opened his eulogy for Louis Althusser with the same feeling of suffering: "I knew in advance that I would be unable to speak today, unable, as they say, to find the words" (*The Work of Mourning* 114).

And, after some paragraphs he continued: "Our friends, your friends who are here today, know why it is almost indecent to speak right now_ . . . But silence too is unbearable. I cannot bear the thought of silence" (114).

The grief he felt also brought him the need to speak. He stated soon after the death of Paul de Man in *Memoires for Paul de Man*: "Speaking is impossible, . . . but so too would be silence or absence or a refusal to share one's sadness" (xvi).

Derrida could not keep silent and started writing texts of mourning soon after the deceased and for the deceased. He was, however, never satisfied with what he did. He felt guilty for speaking just after the death of his friends and colleagues. He could have written about them when they were alive and he imagined that he could write a long time after they were gone; but writing just following their death seemed very "indecent" and "unjustifiable" to him. He said this action was like a desire "to try to profit or derive some benefit, . . . from the dead" (*The Work of Mourning* 51):

> I have had occasion to write about or in the wake of those texts whose authors have been dead long before I read them . . . or whose authors are still living at the time I write, and it would seem that this is always the most risky. But what I thought impossible, indecent and unjustifiable, . . . was to write *following the death*, not after, not long after the death *by returning* to it, but just following the death, upon or on the occasion of the death (49).

We all, like Derrida, mourn just after the decease. We may not write texts but we act in a certain way by holding gatherings, giving tributes and reading funeral orations. We may even read Derrida's or other writers' texts of mourning but can we really feel the same sentiments of grief and suffering they had felt, that moment, for their loss?

The same mourning is inevitably repeated in the case of an event which is completely unique, singular and unrepeatable. We try to be loyal and decent toward the death of others by mourning but Derrida anxiously asks: "is this the best sign of fidelity?" (*The Work of Mourning* 36), or maybe we are just committing infidelity by this kind of commemorating the dead. Brault and Naas expressed clearly in their introduction to Derrida's fourteen repetitive eulogies:

> By pronouncing these texts of mourning in a public forum, by publishing them, Jacques Derrida has, it seems, made unavoidable this slippage from one death to another, this repetition and transference of the rhetoric and perhaps even the sentiments of mourning. We cannot mourn for those another has mourned_ or at least not in the same way. They could not have touched us in the same way, and so we betray them in reading (8).

Derrida was totally aware of the infidelity he committed by composing texts in mourning and repeating almost the same sentiments over and over. He asked that what else he could do for his friends who had all lived, worked and composed in the same time and era as him?

> Each death is unique, of course, and therefore unusual. But what can be said about the unusual when, from Barthes to Althusser, from Foucault to Deleuze, it multiplies, as in a series, all these uncommon ends in the same 'generation'? (*The Work of Mourning* 193).

As mentioned earlier, we have an alternative choice to speaking and acting after a death, and it is to keep silent and not to speak. Though to mourn in silence make us suffer more, we can choose this way if we are sure that it contains no danger of betrayal and infidelity. Derrida believed that this manner ends in failure too.

When we speak about the dead, we are actually presenting no important information. We just repeat some memories which ultimately point to death; not being able to bring the dead to life by talking, we send them again to death. On the other hand, to keep silent seems like trying to forget that the dead were alive in the past. By acting in this dangerous way, we may make our loved ones totally disappear. Not to speak about them will multiply their death and absence and Derrida called this act "indecent" too. Derrida explained these "two infidelities" as follows:

> Two infidelities, an impossible choice: on the one hand not to say anything that comes back to oneself, to one's own voice, to remain silent, or at the very least to let oneself be accompanied or preceded in counterpoint by the friend's voice. Thus, . . . to let him speak, . . . this excess of fidelity would end up saying and exchanging nothing. It returns to death. It points to death, sending death back to death. On the other hand, by avoiding all quotation, all identification, all rapprochement even, . . . one risks making him disappear again, as if one could add more death to death and thus indecently pluralize it. We are left then with having to do and not do both at once, with having to correct one infidelity by the other (*The Work of Mourning* 45).

The danger of infidelity and betrayal is inherent in both choices: to speak and not to speak. Derrida also offered two kinds of infidelities we commit if we decide to act and speak immediately after our loss.

Derrida first argued that the danger of 'narcissism' is always hidden within our reactions; it is a tendency to take pity upon oneself and Derrida called this "egotistical" and "irrepressible" (*The Work of Mourning* 115). We cannot resist the temptation to recall and speak about those who were once alive and close to us, about the time we spent with them and how alone and unbearable life is without them. We are actually betraying the dead since we are thinking not of them but about our own future life without them. Derrida confessed that he also committed this betrayal after the death of his good friend Louis Althusser:

> There is always, as we know, upon the death of a friend, that culpable tendency_ egotistical, to be sure, narcissistic as well, but irrepressible_ that consists in bemoaning and taking pity, that is, taking pity on oneself, by saying, as I myself do . . .: 'A whole part of my life, a long, rich, and intense stretch of my living self has been interrupted today, comes to an end and thus dies with Louis in order to continue to accompany him, as in the past, but this time without return and into the depths of absolute darkness' (*The Work of Mourning* 115).

Betrayal and infidelity, as the necessary and indispensable laws of mourning, contain another hidden danger besides narcissism and it is "self-delusion, and, of course, denial" (Brault and Naas 7). By singing orations to the dead and talking to them about the past events that happened between us and them and by hoping that they may hear us and answer us, we do not want to believe that they are gone forever and we do not accept or respect their eternal absence and genuine alterity; this strange feeling cannot be easily avoided. Brault and Naas explained:

> For even when we use the dead for some end or purpose of our own, even when we speak to the dead

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simply to ask for their forgiveness, it is often because we do not wish to admit that the dead can no longer respond to us, can no longer, for example, offer us their forgiveness (7).

Derrida believes the best sign of fidelity that can be performed towards the deceased is to accept the reality; to acknowledge that they (the dead) are "gone forever, irremediably absent" and can never more hear or respond to us (*Memoires for Paul de Man* 21). We should recognize that a kind of a wall or space exists between us and them and the only thing that remains for us is their "memory" or images living "in us", nothing else. We must recognize that everything we say and do in mourning for the others "remain hopelessly *in* us or *between* us the living, without ever crossing the mirror of a certain speculation. . . . All we seem to have left is memory . . ." (*Memoires for Paul de Man* 32_33).

Our inside space is where we are able to make the one, who no longer lives in the world outside us, visible. We create a clear perspective of the dead inside ourselves. By this act of interiorizing those who have passed away, what we can have is only the "images" of them. Here is Derrida's explanation in his elegy for Louis Marin:

> When we say 'in us', when we speak so easily and so painfully of inside and outside, we are naming space, we are speaking of a visibility of the body . . . an orientation of the perspectives. *We are speaking of images*. What is only *in us* seems to be reducible to images, which might be memories or monuments, but which are reducible in any case to a memory that consists of *visible* scenes that are no longer anything but *images*, since the other of whom they are the images appears only as the one who has disappeared or passed away, as the one who, having passed away, leaves 'in us' only images (*The Work of Mourning* 159).

When we utter that the dead are "in us", we actually approve that our inside and outside are two different spaces or that a considerable distinction exists between them. Brault and Naas called the world of our inside as "a different organization of space" which "comes before and is greater than the whole, that is, comes before and is greater than us" (10).

What does our inside coming before us mean? Derrida called mourning, in the sense of recognizing that the dead are now just visible images we make in ourselves, "interiorization" or "introjections, consumption of the other" (*The Work of Mourning* 159). This reaction of interiorizing is limited and restricted and we can never fully accomplish it. The reason comes from same fact that our inside is greater than us and so comes before us.

We cannot depict the other who is gone as we like since he is already depicted within us. We cannot look at the other but he is looking at each of us differently. The inside is great and the other has already (even preceding his death) made himself manifested singularly in it before we want to create subjective images. Our inside is not ours and is distanced from and beyond us; it belongs to the others.

Here are two examples from the texts of mourning Derrida wrote for Roland Barthes and Louis Marin:

> Roland Barthes looks at us . . . , and we do not do as we please with this look, even though each of us has it at his disposal, in his own way, according to his own place and history. It is within us but it is not ours; we do not have it available to us like a moment or part of our interiority. And what looks at us may be indifferent, loving, dreadful, grateful, attentive, ironic, silent, bored, reserved, fervent, or smiling, a child or already quite old; in short, it can give us any of the innumerable signs of life or death that we might draw from the

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> circumscribed reserve of his texts or our memory (*The Work of Mourning* 44).
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> We are all looked at, I said, and each one singularly, by Louis Marin. He looks at us. *In us*. He looks in us. This witness sees in us. And from now on more than ever. . . . The one who looks at us in us . . . is no longer; he is completely other, infinitely other, as he has always been, and death has more than ever entrusted him, given him over, distanced him, in this infinite alterity (*The Work of Mourning* 161).

We try to reduce the dead into 'images' but the fact is that "the image looks at us". The dead even before their death (as mortal beings) look at us and gaze upon us. They form images inside us from the moment we know them. Derrida continued: "Louis Marin is outside and he is looking at me, he himself, and I am an image for him. At this very moment . . . I know that I am an image for the other and am looked at by the other, even and especially by the mortal other" (*The Work of Mourning* 160).

These sentences not only refer to the dead but also to the living people who are supposed to die sometime. In this way Derrida introduced his new law of mourning: "Mourning follows death but also mourning is prepared and that we expect from the very beginning to follow upon the death of those we love (*The Work of Mourning* 146).

Derrida believed that we begin mourning before death. From the first moment that we get acquainted with someone who can be a future friend or family member, we know that one of us will die first. This "knowledge of finitude" (*Memoirs for Paul de Man* 28) means that we have already begun mourning for him and interiorizing him. Derrida stated in *Memoirs for Paul de Man* : "Everything that we inscribe in the living present of our relation to others already carries, always, the signature of *memoirs_from_beyond_the_grave* " (29).

And Derrida repeated his notion in *The Work of Mourning* : "Even before the unqualifiable event called death, interiority (of the other in me, in you, in us) had already begun its work" (46).

Derrida even has always related the name to death. When we call someone by his/her name or when we are called by someone, we already knew that we are pronouncing a dead man's name since the day will come that we may talk about that person while he/she is gone or he will survive and speak our name while we are no longer alive: "The name begins during his (each man's) life to get along without him, speaking and bearing his death each time it is pronounced" (*Memoirs for Paul de Man* 49).

Each person's name presents him as a unique being while at the same time betraying its bearer's singularity since, as Derrida revealed "the name alone makes possible the plurality of deaths" (*The Work of Mourning* 46). Even when we are still living, our names carry death. The name declares both the uniqueness and possible future death of its bearer. By pronouncing a man's name, we are warned that this name is definitely moving towards death; it has already begun making us ready for mourning in behalf of the man. Our names do not actually belong to us, but are owned by the dead:

> The name races toward death even more quickly than we do, we who naively believe that we bear it. It bears us with infinite speed toward the end. It is in advance the name of a dead person. And of a premature death that comes to us in it, through it, without ever being properly our own (*The Work of Mourning* 130).

We may believe that since we are already aware of death and prepared for it, we will not be shocked when it actually happens. The fact is that every time we lose someone we love, we feel an unprecedented and unique absence and void. Each death hits us in a

singular way as if our world has come to an end. We share a different world with everyone we love and when the other dies, one of our unique worlds and relations is gone forever. For example, Derrida wrote for Louis Althusser:

> What is coming to an end, what Louis is taking away with him, is not only something or other that we would have shared at some point or another, in one place or another, but the world itself, a certain origin of the world_his origin, no doubt, but also that of the world in which I lived, in which we lived a unique story (*The Work of Mourning* 115).

And here is what Derrida wrote after the death of his friend Max Loreau: "I lack the strength . . . to recall each time another end of the world, the same end, another, and each time it is nothing less than an origin of the world, each time the sole world, the unique world (*The Work of Mourning* 95).

In spite of this uniqueness and singularity of each death, we repeat mourning for our lost worlds several times: "In 'each death' there is an end of the world, and yet the rhetoric of mourning allows us to speak of this end and multiply it, both to anticipate it and repeat it . . . one death after another" (Brault and Naas 15).

We pluralize something which is singular and this means to commit infidelity and betrayal with regard to the others. Derrida believed that we betray our loved ones by mourning for them just as we have mourned for the others.

Though Derrida acknowledged that "each death is unique, of course, and therefore unusual" (*The Work of Mourning* 193), he mourned for all his fourteen friends and colleagues or (it is better to say) betrayed them by citing similar texts with the same sentiments on their absence. Brault & Naas affirmed that "Derrida has himself written not just one but several texts of mourning, the betrayal of the unique

other, of the friend, appears not only spoken about but enacted, played out". What else can be done? There is no other way for us and Derrida to respond to a unique event except by repetition. Brault & Naas asked: "How can one mourn the singular event all the while knowing that there have been and probably will be other friends to mourn" (16).

Here we may pose the essential question. Why did not Derrida keep silent? Why did he prefer to mourn and respond to each absolute unique event in a general and conventional way though he was aware of its infidelities? In answer we can name two reasons:

First Derrida intended to keep the memory of the unique existence of his deceased friends and colleagues, who were prominent literary and philosophical figures, eternally alive and known to everyone and future generations. For this purpose, he wrote specific dates and places related to them, quoted their own words, talked about their works, accomplishments, lives and of course his own personal relationship with them. As Brault & Naas mentioned:

> Derrida courts this infidelity . . . noting dates and places, works and days, not so as to absorb the singularity of the deceased into some literary or philosophical history but so as to mark their unique time and place among us, the only ones they ever had and will ever have (21).

The second possible reason was that Derrida felt responsible to quote, cite and repeat his dead friends' words and deeds endlessly so that he could let them live on and not to be forgotten. We try to be faithful to the dead by actually betraying them; we desire to speak and write to them while we know they can never hear us. This is, however, what the mortal beings are able to do which corresponds to their responsibility toward the dead; the dead who have this only and last chance to be heard. As Derrida declared:

> This being at a loss also has to do with a duty: to let the friend speak, to turn speech over to him, his speech, and especially not to take it from him, not to take it in his place_ no offense seems worse at the death of a friend_ to allow him to speak, to occupy his silence or to take up speech oneself only in order, if this is possible, to give it back to him (*The Work of Mourning* 95).

It is our significant duty to respond to the death of the others, to repeat their own words and speak about them even if we cannot find the right words at that moment because of our grief. Do not keep silent since our words are our lost ones' only weapons to fight with "the forces that work to efface or conceal . . . the names on the tombstones" (Brault and Naas 30).

CHAPTER IV

CHARLOTTE BRONTË, BORN, WROTE, DIED

IV.I The Raw Facts about Brontë's Life

Charlotte Brontë is the creator of one of the most prominent literary works, *Jane Eyre*, and the other outstanding novels called *The Professor*, *Shirley* and *Villette*. She was born on the 21st of April, 1816 at Thornton, Yorkshire. Her mother, who was characterized by extreme piety, tenderness, and gentility, gave birth to six children: Maria, Elizabeth, Charlotte, Patrick Branwell, Emily Jane and Ann.

When Charlotte was five years old her pale and suffering mother died. In 1824, Mr. Brontë decided to send his daughters to a school at Cowan Bridge. The school was an unhealthy one with its dirty food and water and the tainted meat. Maria, the innocent child of eleven years old, died in 1825 after suffering from her illness and the frequent unjust punishments of a cruel teacher. Elizabeth's death followed soon after Maria's. Mr. Brontë anxiously removed Charlotte and Emily from the school. Charlotte left the distasteful school with a revengeful and hateful heart and mind; she could never forget the image of her dear suffering sister.

When she was nineteen, Brontë began to work as a teacher at Miss Wooler's school. Emily was so deeply attached to the home that she could not endure to live away from Haworth; Brontë frightened, sent her sister back home before she may see her die of home-sickness.

Anne had begun to suffer from symptoms of illness and watching her little sister cough and breath with difficulty was really unbearable for Brontë's weak and desolated heart which had already the experience of losing her two dear older sisters, Maria and Elizabeth: "I have one aching feeling at my heart. It is about Anne; she has so much to endure: far, far more than I ever had" (Gaskell 79).

Brontë travelled to a school in Brussels, Belgium, the Pensionnat of Madame Héger. Her stay at school between 1842 and 1844 was accompanied by a new kind of estrangement, solitariness and home-sickness. She wrote about some of her experiences in Brussels in her first novel, *The Professor*. Then she composed her most outstanding novel, *Jane Eyre*, in 1847, in which she employed both fantasy and realism and her passionate female feelings to narrate her story. Brontë's courage was admirable for her success in creating a masterpiece while living in a totally depressing situation: her only brother lay all day remorsefully on his bed; "his gifts and his life were lost", "her father's sight hanging on a thread" and her little sister's health was gradually vanishing (Gaskell 12).

In 1848, she was dealing with many domestic anxieties related to her sister, father and brother. Here is a part of her sad letter:

> Branwell has, by some means, contrived to get more money from the old quarter, and has led us a sad life. . . . Papa is harassed day and night; we have little peace, he is always sick; has two or three times fallen down in fits; what will be the ultimate end, God knows (Gaskell 27).

Branwell Brontë died in September 1848 and Brontë wrote after his death:

> He is in God's hands now; . . . The final separation, the spectacle of his pale corpse, gave me more acute bitter

pain than I could have imagined. Till the last hour comes, we never know how much we can forgive, pity, regret a near relative. All his vices were and are nothing now. We remember only his woes (Gaskell 35).

Emily was also declining gradually in health; she did not let any doctor see her and refused to take any medicines though she had severe coughs and pains in her chests. Charlotte was suffering while watching her getting thinner, paler and silent each passing day; she knew her sister was dying:

These things make one feel, as well as know, that this world is not our abiding-place. We should not knit human ties too close, or clasp human affections too fondly. They must leave us, or we must leave them, one day. God restore health and strength to all who need it! (qtd in Gaskell 36).

Emily died in December 1848 after much suffering. Charlotte, Anne and their father were sad but calm since Emily was not enduring pains anymore; they felt that she was at peace at last. Anne got sick after this sad event and doctor diagnosed her fast progressing illness as tuberculosis. She wrote her last verses and then was removed to Scarborough so that the fine weather may benefit her. She died there in May 1849 and was buried there since Charlotte thought this had been her preference.

Brontë returned to Haworth but this time her being at home alone without her sisters did not console her. She mourned days and nights for her sisters. Charlotte had commenced the writing of *Shirley* before Branwell's and her sisters' death but now she had to complete it alone in suffering and emotional pain, without having anyone to talk to about her novel.

She endured the pain with strength as she had done it before and *Shirley* was finished in September 1849. The publication of *Shirley* on

October 26th was followed by fame and success, but most of the reviews and critiques about *Shirley* were not favoured by Brontë who exclaimed: "Comparatively few reviewers, even in their praise, evince a just comprehension of the author's meaning" (qtd in Gaskell 53).

Shirley did not gain the same appreciation and success as *Jane Eyre* did; but Brontë exclaimed that she expected her latest novel to draw much more favorable comments from the readers since she had spent more time and effort for writing it while she was suffering the agony of losing her sisters. Here is the comparison of her two novels:

> *Shirley* is disparaged in comparison with *Jane Eyre*; and yet I took great pains with Shirley. I did not hurry; I tried to do my best, and my own impression was that it was not inferior to the former work; indeed, I had bestowed on it more time, thought, and anxiety: but great part of it was written under the shadow of impending calamity; and the last volume, I cannot deny, was composed in the eager, restless endeavour to combat mental sufferings that were scarcely tolerable (qtd in Gaskell 69).

In 1850, Brontë intended to republish her sisters' works, *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey*, and write some kind of prefaces for them. This task of reading and writing about her sisters after their death and bringing back her sad recollections was very painful and depressing for her. However the fact that their genius works were going to be admired and appreciated even while they were dead revived Brontë's spirits for some time.

Her health, strength and desire to write improved as the winter passed; she firmly decided to sit and focus on writing. Though the illness and depression were active in her body and mind, Brontë eventually managed to complete *Villette* by the end of 1852 and it was published in January 1853. The result was the creation of a "morbid

and weak" protagonist called Lucy Snowe whose "cold name" clearly expressed her "external coldness" (Brontë qtd in Gaskell 98).

In London, the critiques, her hosts and friends received her and her novel *Villette*, for the last time, with "utmost kindness" and "burst of acclamation". *Villette*, as Gaskell approved, displayed "more of the extraordinary genius of the author. . . . Out of so small a circle of characters, dwelling in so dull and monotonous an area as a 'pension', this wonderful tale was evolved!" (102). Some reviews, however, criticized *Villette* and its protagonist but Brontë described her character, Lucy Snowe, as quoted by Gaskell, as follows:

> As to the character of 'Lucy Snowe,' my intention from the first was that she should not occupy the pedestal to which 'Jane Eyre' was raised by some injudicious admirers. She is where I meant her to be, and where no charge of self-laudation can touch her (105).

During the last months of 1853 and the first months of 1854, Brontë wrote her last letters to her friends; she still felt very alone and depressed: "It is so bad for the mind to be quite alone and to have none with whom to talk over little crosses and disappointments, and laugh them away" (qtd in Fraser 360).

CHAPTER V

DEFERRAL OF MEANING IN *SHIRLEY* AND *VILLETTE*

This chapter is based on Derrida's idea of deferred and impossible meaning. It will investigate how this idea is at work in Brontë's *Shirley* and *Villette*. The reviews from Miriam Allott's critical heritage are taken as the main sources.

V.I *Shirley*, An Inadequate Story

Shirley Keeldar is a strong, rich, independent and spirited woman. She and Caroline are best friends and first it seems that they love the same man, Robert. Robert, who has difficulties in his business because of the labor unrest and the Napoleonic Wars, loves his cousin Caroline, but believes in his marriage to the wealthy Shirley Keeldar which will solve his financial problems. Shirley loves Robert's brother Louis, a poor but a proud tutor, and rejects Robert's proposal to her. Robert, whose financial difficulties are somehow alleviated, decides to marry Caroline. Shirley and Louis are eventually united after having some problematic conversations together; Shirley is a headstrong woman and does not easily yield to the authority of Louis. The novel ends while two weddings are going to be held: Robert with Caroline, and Louis with Shirley.

Shirley is a novel with many purposes. Brontë was ambitious in writing it in terms of expressing her social and political concerns. Nevertheless, George Henry Lewes found a kind of indecision behind

the writing of this novel. Did Brontë aim at describing the society of Yorkshire and the lives going on there in those days? Is *Shirley* a political story? Did she want to sketch some characters in detail or is a realistic and interesting love story being narrated? Here is Lewes's severe judgment of *Shirley* in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1850 as quoted by Morris:

> The authoress never seems distinctly to have made up her mind as to what she was to do; whether to describe the habits and manners of Yorkshire and its social aspects in the days of King Lud, or to paint character, or to tell a love story. . . . [Charlotte Brontë] has much yet to learn, and, especially, the discipline of her own tumultuous energies (285).

Though Lewes criticized Brontë's unrestrained purposes and energies in writing, today we see this indecisive treatment of the novels as a positive intrinsic feature of all texts which has opened the way up for many changeable interpretations.

Shirley has another quality which suspends our immediate judgments and contributes to the different meanings. Kucich has called this pattern the "general reserve, . . . a martyring of creative potential" or "deliberate refusals of self-expression" (913).

Brontë, though a passionate and energetic writer, also deliberately reserved her passion; she tried to limit, control and oppress her thoughts, feelings and desires in writing her novels, according to the dictates of Victorian propriety. Brontë felt safety in her reserve and the diligent reader can feel the strong but hidden and oppressed desires of her characters. What the characters say to each other and how they act may mean far more than and different from what is designated in the novel. Kucich quoted what Brontë told to G. H. Lewes: "When I first began to write, I restrained imagination, eschewed romance, repressed excitement" (913).

The following pages will describe how a novel can support seemingly irreconcilable conditions. *Shirley* with its specific manner of description and opposite discourses stemmed from reserved and oppressed passions leads us to many Derridean conclusions.

V.II *Shirley*; Meaning Deferred, Not Finally revealed and Neither Deferred Forever

Shirley and its characters leave the readers in an endless expectation; more than one plausible and noncontradicting meaning can be identified and all meaning is deferred. As Derrida asserted and we will witness here, these literary works as any other text have always been read and interpreted and will continue to be open to interpretations. The author's death or absence and the total change of the Victorian society and its people's habits and manners, which had inspired Brontë to write, do not prevent the text from meaning something at any time it is read by any generation; these events, as Derrida mentioned, actually lend new possible meanings to the text:

> The total absence of the subject and object of a statement _ the death of the writer and/or the disappearance of the objects he was able to describe _ does not prevent a text from 'meaning' something. On the contrary, this possibility gives birth to meaning as such, gives it out to be heard and read (*Speech and Phenomena* 93).

First, we are going to reflect on the opening of Brontë's story but before the opening words our attention should be inclined toward the title: *Shirley*. As Derrida has remarked: "A title is always a promise" (*Mémoires: for Paul de Man* 115).

What does the title mean or promise us? Is it a given name? a male or female one? It can also be a family name or a nickname; or maybe it is the name of an old country in England. This has been considered because of the appearance of the word shire in *Shirley*; it makes us remember some of the British countries bearing the '-shire' suffix, such as Yorkshire. If it is a name, is the person going to be introduced to us from her childhood or not? We may suppose the name to belong to a female since the writer is a woman. Is she/he an orphan like Jane Eyre? Is she (if a woman) going to be a governess? Will the protagonist get married or may die? From the moment we read the title the meaning and reference are suspended; it is not clear what the title refers to. Even though Shirley turns out to be the name of the protagonist, we can never know why this name with many connotations has been chosen for her (while there is also no information about her family and childhood).

Now we come to the first chapter; again a strange title: '*Levitical*'. Here is the definition of Levitical in *Merriam-Webster's online dictionary*: "of or pertaining to the Levites: the members of the priestly Hebrew tribe of Levi; of or pertaining to the book of Leviticus in the Bible, to Levitical law". It is related to the priests and those appointed to assist the priests. There seems also to be a reference to the book of the Bible called Leviticus, which contains all the laws, rules and regulations sent to the Israelites by God through Moses. We can never certainly understand why the story begins with such a subject. However, we keep the question in mind as we pass from the title to reading of the first paragraph:

> Of late years an abundant shower of curates has fallen upon the north of England: they lie very thick on the hills; every parish has one or more of them; they are young enough to be very active, and ought to be doing

a great deal of good. But not of late years are we about to speak; we are going back to the beginning of this century: late years--present years are dusty, sunburnt, hot, arid; we will evade the noon, forget it in siesta, pass the midday in slumber, and dream of dawn (*Shirley* 3).

This paragraph about some curates illustrates a kind of irrelevant

and disturbing scene and till now, after the two suspending titles, this scene is the third example or experience of deferred meaning. It may make us think that the story is going to be a sad and melancholic one, since the writer is trying to postpone the real story and characters until the next chapters. As Derrida has emphatically said: "There is no literature without a *suspended* relation to meaning and reference. *Suspended* means *suspense*, but also *dependence*, condition, conditionality" (*This Strange Institution Called Literature* 48).

Brontë opened *Shirley* in the same manner as she opened her previous novel *Jane Eyre*. The commencements of both of them defer the real stories. However, in *Shirley* the real story itself will turn up to be equivocal and wavering. A review printed in the *Daily News* in 1849 criticized Brontë for preventing her readers from entering directly into the main subject of her stories:

Like people who put dwarfs and monsters to keep their gates, or ugly dogs to deter idle folk from entering, so doth this writer manage to have an opening chapter or two of the most deterring kind. What [is] so disgusting as the family in the midst of whom Jane Eyre is first discovered? The three curates and their junketing, with whom Shirley commences, is [sic] quite as vulgar, as unnecessary, and as disgusting (Allott 117).

Derrida in *Aporias* explains that a reader cannot be admitted right into the story, until being deferred for some time by "the very experience of the threshold" (33). The reader has to spend time at the

beginning of the story so that he/she can be admitted to continue. The 1849 Atlas review actually used the same term about *Shirley* as Derrida later used: "The first chapter of *Shirley* is enough to deter many a reader from advancing a step further than the threshold" (Allott 121).

With the particulars of this first chapter regarding the out of place and ridiculing descriptions of the three curates called Mr. Donne, Mr. Malone and Mr. Sweeting and the use of words such as "hot arid" noon, "slumber", "dream", "cool and solid", "cold lentils", "bitter herbs", we may also feel that the story before us is as an uninteresting and unimportant one. However, the writer is Charlotte Brontë whose first appearance as author of *Jane Eyre* revealed a very powerful writer, so we continue to read, continually suspending our judgments and with a degree of suspense. Brontë warns the reader about the quality of her story but without reading it we can never know if she really means what she says:

> Do you anticipate sentiment, and poetry, and reverie?
> Do you expect passion, and stimulus, and melodrama?
> Calm your expectations; reduce them to a lowly
> standard. Something real, cool, and solid lies before
> you; something unromantic as Monday morning (*Shirley*
> 3).

In the second chapter called '*The Wagons*' we come across a brief and simple political situation (the Yorkshire rioters), and we are introduced to a headstrong mill-owner, Robert Moore, supposed to be the hero: "Moore, the hero, is a mill-owner, who persists in introducing machinery. He makes sore enemies of his hands, who plot against him, break his frames, and at last attack his mill. . . . But the author cares not to dwell upon them" (Allott 118).

The rioters are left for now and in the third chapter another male character is sketched. It seems that Brontë cares about this new

character called Mr. Yorke, since she devotes the following chapter to describe him and his manners. This causes hesitation and wonder about Mr. Moore's being the only hero. Moreover the real character of Mr. Yorke is not clearly depicted as we continually come across some opposing pictures of him. His good and bad habits are described but it is difficult to find both traits in a real person. Here are the descriptions:

> He has spoken with some sense and with some good feeling to Mr. Moore, but you are not thence to conclude that he always spoke and thought justly and kindly (*Shirley* 34).
> . . .
> To judge by his threats, he would have employed arbitrary, even cruel, means to advance the cause of freedom and equality. Equality! yes, Mr. Yorke talked about equality, but at heart he was a proud man--very friendly to his workpeople, very good to all who were beneath him. . . . Revolt was in his blood: he could not bear control (*Shirley* 35).

In chapter IX, we are introduced to Mr. York's wife; she is a large woman with a very grave aspect and controlling nature. Her treatment of her husband shatters our image of the revolting and uncontrollable Mr. Yorke: "She [Mrs. Yorke] would not have permitted him [Mr. Yorke] to have any friend in the world beside herself. All his relations were insupportable to her, and she kept them at arm's length" (*Shirley* 112).

Shirley Keelder and then Caroline Helstone seem to be the main female protagonists, but though Shirley is the first heroine, it is actually the second heroine, Caroline, whose virtues influences the hero:

> The second heroine, Caroline Helstone, represents all of the esteemed qualities of the domestic woman, and through Caroline's moral influence Robert Moore, the hero, assumes those bourgeois virtues of good management and prudent leadership (Morris 286).

In chapter V, we come across this female character, Caroline. The manner of describing her is so precise and detailed that we may be convinced in supposing her the heroine; Caroline Helstone, the rector's niece, is a beautiful woman with true and pure sentiments. After reading up to nearly sixty pages of the novel, we are finally introduced to the woman called Shirley Keeldar in the eleventh chapter which is called *Fieldhead*, the name of a village. Shirley describes that her parents gave her a masculine name and she feels more like a man rather than a woman. Whether this fact makes Shirley a hero-like figure or, on the contrary, pushes her one step below Caroline as the true heroine is never understood:

> They gave me a man's name; I hold a man's position. It is enough to inspire me with a touch of manhood; and when I see such people as that stately Anglo-Belgian— that Gérard Moore--before me, gravely talking to me of business, really I feel quite gentlemanlike (*Shirley* 153).

It is not simple to accept Shirley with such male traits as the true heroine since the reader has got used to the pale and feeble figure of Caroline and her gentlest and most affectionate heart. Why has Shirley appeared now and in a manly manner? How will this new character change our opinion of her and Caroline? The 1849 *Atlas* review described the view of the people of that time about Caroline as quoted by Allott: "Caroline Helstone, the real heroine of *Shirley*, is a sweeter, gentler creature; more of a 'young lady' _ fitter for everyday life and genteel society" (121).

Though the story has been simple and unstirring till now, it has continually called for our attention and suspicion and made itself both readable and unreadable for us. Muller and Richardson have quoted Barbara Johnson in their Derridean reading of Poe's story *The Purloined Letter*. Johnson believes that "a literary text" both "calls out irresistibly

for analysis" and "places its would-be-reader in a vertiginously insecure position" (213). This is exactly what the book *Shirley* does. In each chapter we come across a simple situation which should be analyzed but which also leaves us in expecting a new situation. We can never be assured about what we think and our judgments are endlessly deferred.

From the beginning (title included), *Shirley* asks its reader to analyze it; the story presents itself to the reader for interpretation but simultaneously it escapes from being interpreted. *Shirley* continually subverts our judgments and prevents us from mastering the text. Shirley Keeldar's presence is delayed and some womanly traits such as being very gentle and affectionate are attributed not to Shirley but to Caroline. Three useless curates begin the story and the presence of Robert Moore is also delayed. Robert's love seems to belong to Caroline and so we may be introduced to a man who is in love with Shirley; we will not confront him (Louis) until the 23rd chapter.

The novel points here and there to the 1848 political unrest, violence and riots caused by the common people in England but *Shirley* was not supposed to be a political novel and these issues were not focused on. When we examine the novel for some true romantic love stories, we can neither find any: Robert does nothing to improve his feelings toward Caroline and Shirley is so firm and manly that any romantic relationship between her and a man seems strange; so what can be the main subject matter of this story that we can search for?

This novel, just like Derrida's texts, as Barbara Johnson affirms in *The Purloined Poe*, "is itself structured by its own deferment, . . . making the reader wonder whether there is really any true subject matter there at all"; but we should never forget that "in spite of the absence of mastery, there is no lack of effects of power" (qtd in Muller and Richardson 214).

The effects of the power of *Shirley* are demonstrated in the endless deferral of its meaning. Barbara Johnson quotes the answer of some people to the question "What is literature" as follows: "Literature is language . . . but it is language around which we have drawn a frame". Derrida objected this remark about literature and did not accept that a literary text "remains inside certain definite borders". Derrida illustrated that literature "is a scene of writing whose boundaries crumble off into an abyss" (qtd in Muller and Richardson 230).

Going beyond the boundaries is not only possible, but also indispensible in regarding to the written texts: "The total inclusion of the frame is both mandatory and impossible" and this condition is what subverts the act of interpretation and makes the total comprehension of literature impossible: "If 'comprehension' is the framing of something whose limits are undeterminable, how can we know what we are comprehending?" (Johnson, qtd in Muller and Richardson 231).

Derrida represented two extra dimensions by which he was enabled to "problematize the literary text's frame. . . . It is by means of these two extra dimensions that Derrida intends to show the crumbling, abyssal, nontotalizable edges of the story's frame" (qtd in Muller and Richardson 232-33):

> 1. *The textual signifier's resistance to being totally transformed into a signified.*
> 2. *The actual writings*.

Here is an example for the first dimension. We can decide to consider *Shirley* as a love story. It ends in two marriages which seem as happy ones, since the couples love each other. Caroline marries Robert, "a kind glance" from whom "would have made me [Caroline] happy till to-morrow" (*Shirley* 131), and Shirley marries Louis who feels that it is "better pass half an hour in remonstrating with her [Shirley]

than a day in admiring or praising any other woman alive" (*Shirley* 387).

In spite of this, the act of marrying and living happily together as the textual signifier in this novel "resists being thus totalized into meaning" (Muller and Richardson 232). How the characters think and scornfully speak of marriage and the final marriages of the main characters, who deserve to be happy in their life, are in contrast. Mr. Helstone, the rector and Caroline's uncle, regarded marriage "a piece of pure folly" and maintained that "it is decidedly the wisest plan to remain single". In answering his niece's question: "are all marriages unhappy?" he said: "Millions of marriages are unhappy. If everybody confessed the truth, perhaps all are more or less so" (*Shirley* 76).

Mrs. Pryor, Shirley's governess whose main identity (being Caroline's mother) is kept a secret from the reader for a long time, also expressed the same gloomy views of marriage, which makes the reader wonder why the writer has condemned her heroes and heroines to the fate of marriage and has not let them remain single and free:

> It is never wholly happy. Two people can never literally be as one. There is, perhaps, a possibility of content under peculiar circumstances, such as are seldom combined; but it is as well not to run the risk--you may make fatal mistakes. Be satisfied, my dear. Let all the single be satisfied with their freedom (*Shirley* 284).

The second dimension, *The actual writings*, includes for example the "previous tales that surround" the story "with a frame of (literary) references" (Muller and Richardson 232). In *Shirley*, we can find the same old idea which had led Brontë's previous story *Jane Eyre*: the idea of a governess and "her master" (Allott 125). The difference is that Brontë has changed the position from a man of property and a governess to a lady of property and a tutor:

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The peculiar power which was so greatly admired in *Jane Eyre* is not absent from this book. Indeed it is repeated, if we may so speak of anything so admirable, with too close and vivid a resemblance. The position of Shirley and her tutor is that of Jane and her master reversed. Robert and Louis Moore are not quite such social savages, externally, as Mr. Rochester; but in trifling with women's affections they are hardly less harsh or selfish, and they are just as strong in will and giant in limb (Allott 125).

As a result, the main story of *Shirley* does not begin within this novel; it has already begun in the previous tale. "The word beginning", as Beidler has observed, "emphasizes not the beginning itself but the fact that the beginning is absent and must remain so" (350). The beginning is not a real beginning; it is haunted by the past stories. As Royle quoted Derrida: "And in the beginning, there is the and" (14). The reader, however, can still feel a kind of fresh and lively interest in the repeated story since the content of the novel exists not only in another novel or outside our text but also within the present text. Master, governess relationship and the story of Rochester's harsh and selfish nature has already begun but not ended. These issues continue within a new text or a new context and a substituted structure: lady and tutor relationship and the story of Robert's harsh and self-satisfied manners.

We can also detect the traces of another story in *Shirley*; the manufacturers, the masters and employers bring Gaskell's *Mary Barton* into our minds and make us feel already acquainted with the novel's features and characters. A review in 1849 called *Standard of Freedom* which had compared *Shirley* with *Mary Barton*, printed the following sentences:

We observe in *Shirley* evident traces of the author's admiration of *Mary Barton*. . . . The author of *Mary*

> *Barton* lays her scene in the heart of the great
> manufacturing town; the author of *Shirley* in the
> country; and both introduce the struggles of master
> manufacturers and their work-people (Allott 134).

The method of treating the events and characters has also been very effective in stimulating indefinite interpretations. As the *Examiner* review declared in 1849 "mental analysis", which has always been most open to many interpretations, was what the authoress added to her repetition of almost the same idea and characters. The events and figures are described just as how the writer had felt and thought they should be and how she had wished to describe and no pre-structured theories ruled over Brontë's events and characters. Everything she wrote in *Shirley* has flowed from within her own mind and interests:

> In *Shirley*, the characters, imagery, and incidents are
> not impressed from without, but elaborated from
> within. They are the reflex of the writer's peculiar
> feelings and wishes. . . . She does not, subordinate
> human interests to moral theories, nor, . . . , waste her
> strength in impetuous passion. Keen, intellectual
> analysis is her forte (Allott 126).

Though *Shirley* is based on the author's thoughts and interest, the act of interpretation takes place also according to the reader's thoughts and experiences: "A text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue (Barthes, *The Death of the Author* 148).

Each reading is a collaborative work between the writer and the reader who interprets the novel adhering to his/her own culture, life style, personality and principles. Especially when mental analysis is imposed upon the treatment of the events and characters, the reader is freer to interpret without feeling the need to attain the author's fixed meaning. This is because each reader can read and understand such a

text (with no pre-structured theories) more based on his/her personal patterns and experiences. As a result, meaning is pluralized and one definite meaning can never be obtained.

As Morris has affirmed, Brontë had tried to get the most use of the power of her mind and intelligence. Her story progresses in a slow manner since she was spending considerable time and energy in analyzing and scrutinizing each event and figure. This process helped her to momentarily deal with her personal sorrows: "In writing *Shirley* Brontë was seeking to escape from the 'crushing' reality of the deaths of her brother and sisters, . . . by turning to energizing intellectual and imaginative activity" (Morris 306).

Brontë's intellectual analysis resulted in creating what was criticized as "too-extended dialogue; it does not advance but endlessly retards the development of the story (Allott 135). Although the extended dialogues, the trivial and irrelevant incidents and the presence of very many figures in the story impede the development of the action, they continually provoke the readers' interest whose experience of novels leads them to expect to come upon some energetic and exciting passages.

Nearly one half of the book is, however, not connected to the main tale and it is only in the last chapters that we glimpse the romantic, but eventually the lengthy problematic conversations between Shirley and Louis make the meaning deferred forever. Do they really have pure and refined sentiments toward each other? Here is the extended description of this deferral:

For a long time, we are left to suppose that Shirley Keeldar's affections are towards Robert Moore, the same manufacturer with whom Caroline Helstone is in love. The disclosure of the main love story is endlessly deferred since, although the penultimate chapter reveals

Louis's proposal to Shirley and her consent, the real nature of their relationship gets lost within the dialogues. Here is Louis's indirect proposal and Shirley's consent:

> I have to tell you that for four years you have been growing into your tutor's heart, and that you are rooted there now. I have to declare that you have bewitched me, in spite of sense, and experience, and difference of station and estate. . . . I love you--love you with my life and strength. It is out now. (*Shirley* 463).

And after some delaying exchange of dialogue Shirley answered: "Dear Louis, be faithful to me; never leave me. I don't care for life unless I may pass it at your side" (*Shirley* 465).

Through Louis's soliloquizing in Chapter XXIX, we were already informed of his feelings toward Shirley, but Shirley's emotions were concealed. Even in chapter XXXI, which consists of a long deterring conversation between Shirley and her uncle about her marriage intentions, we were not supplied with any confession of her love to Louis Moore and she ambiguously pretended that Robert Moore is the one who has influenced her:

> 'Do you know . . . the whole neighbourhood teems with rumours respecting you and a bankrupt tenant of yours, the foreigner Moore?
> . . .
> Is it he you will marry?'
> 'He is handsome, and manly, and commanding.'
> 'You declare it to my face! The Flemish knave! the low trader!'
> 'He is talented, and venturous, and resolute. Prince is on his brow and ruler in his bearing.'
> 'She glories in it! She conceals nothing! No shame, no fear!'
> 'When we speak the name of Moore, shame should be forgotten and fear discarded. The Moores know only honour and courage.'
> . . .

> 'That Moore is the brother of my son's tutor. Would you let the usher call you sister?
>
> . . .
>
> Mr. Louis Moore's sister you will be.'
>
> 'Mr. Sympson, I am sick at heart with all this weak trash; I will bear no more. Your thoughts are not my thoughts, your aims are not my aims, your gods are not my gods. We do not view things in the same light; we do not measure them by the same standard; we hardly speak in the same tongue. Let us part' (*Shirley* 413).

Shirley in mentioning the name of Moore never refers directly to Robert's name. She deliberately misguides her uncle by using the plural family name and allowing the possibility of double meanings: Robert Moore or Louis Moore, but the main distinction of this romantic relationship, in which the meaning is deferred forever, is "the reversibility of power relations" which, as Kucich mentioned, is "directly a part of the romantic relationship" (Kucich 931) in Brontë's novels (especially *Jane Eyre* and *Shirley*).

"The relations of dominance", as Kucich called it, continually change between Shirley and Louis during their conversation and we can never conclude that the power rests entirely on Shirley's or on Louis's side. What Kucich indicated about the Rochester-Jane relationship (master/pupil relation) is true about the Shirley-Louis relationship (the reversed position: lady/tutor relation): "We should notice how the rhetoric of the novel stipulates power's reversibility, and how master/pupil relations oscillate even in the conclusion of the novel" (931).

Here are some sentences from the novel which first manifest Shirley to be in the most powerful position: "Shirley is wealth and power. And she is beauty too, and love" (*Shirley* 194).

> Perfect health was Shirley's enviable portion. Though warm-hearted and sympathetic, she was not nervous;

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powerful emotions could rouse and sway without exhausting her spirit. The tempest troubled and shook her while it lasted, but it left her elasticity unbent, and her freshness quite unblighted (*Shirley* 262).

And when in chapter XXVII, Shirley's 'worldly' uncle warns her that she could make a wealthy, 'proper' and 'suitable match', Shirley's answer exhibits the considerable power she owns:

'What, in the name of common law and common sense, would you or could you do if my pleasure led me to a choice you disapproved?'
'Take care! take care!' warning her with voice and hand that trembled alike.
'Why? What shadow of power have you over me? Why should I fear you?' (*Shirley* 350).

In chapter XXVIII, we find the first example of the reversal of power relation between Shirley and Louis, when Shirley eventually decides to inform him about a panting dog that bit her and ran away. Before she revealed the truth, Louis had admired her power of mind: "With your powerful mind you must feel independent of help, of advice, of society" (*Shirley* 379). After she confesses being distressed about the possible outcome of the bite, Louis views her as an inferior creature as a woman: "You are very nervous and womanish" he says, and Shirley reacts in wonder: "You complimented me two minutes since on my powerful mind" (*Shirley* 380).

When Louis is soliloquizing, we learn about his thoughts and the fact that he believes it his 'natural right' to control Shirley and keep her in a subordinate position as his wife. Here the power is on Louis's side and Shirley is sketched as a faulty woman who is always in need of a powerful husband to guide her with his knowledge and prudence:

It was unutterably sweet to feel myself at once near her and above her--to be conscious of a natural right and power to sustain her, as a husband should sustain

his wife. I worship her perfections; but it is her faults, or at least her foibles, that bring her near to me, that nestle her to my heart, that fold her about with my love, and that for a most selfish but deeply-natural reason. These faults are the steps by which I mount to ascendency over her (*Shirley* 388).

The elevated instability in the alternation of power and dominance can be witnessed within the most important conversation which took place between Louis and Shirley and resulted in his proposal and her confession of love. The discussion begins with both parties making sarcastic remarks. For example Louis wishes to find a "young, penniless, friendless orphan girl" who should also be somehow educated, "honest and modest":

I care nothing for attainments, but I would fain have the germ of those sweet natural powers which nothing acquired can rival; any temper Fate wills _ I can manage the hottest. To such a creature as this I should like to be first tutor and then husband. I would teach her my language, my habits and my principles, and then I would reward her with my love (*Shirley* 458-9).

And Shirley answered coldly: "If she willed it, monseigneur" (459).

What Kucich believes is correct about Jane and Rochester's relationship is also true about Shirley and Louis's relationship which "is always constituted as a battleground - but a battleground with power flowing alternately in two directions (932). The main battle starts with a bold and daring comparison made by Shirley. She masters the language by comparing Louis's face to her dog Tartar: "It looks like Tartar. You are my mastiff's cousin. I think you as much like him as a man can be like a dog" (*Shirley* 461-2).

During the conversation, we discover that Shirley has the power of influencing and controlling Louis's emotions; nothing will injure and torture Louis more than Shirley's keeping silent or her trying to leave

him. Louis beseeches her to say something but he does this not without exercising authority and command:

> 'I would almost rather die than let you leave me just now, without speaking the word I demand.
> . . .
> What I am dying and perishing to hear; what I must and will hear; what you dare not now suppress' (*Shirley* 463).

When Shirley calls Louis "my master" (463) in a low voice, it becomes clear that Louis can physically control Shirley. Shortly after, Shirley's power shines when Louis calls her "my sovereign" (464). Then Louis immediately changes the situation to his own benefit and orders her to be an obedient and submissive creature: "You are mine. I will never let you go. Wherever my home be, I have chosen my wife. If I stay in England, in England you will stay; if I cross the Atlantic, you will cross it also" (464). And Shirley humbly obeys her master like a dog that obeys its keeper: "I am glad I know my keeper and am used to him. Only his voice will I follow; only his hand shall manage me; only at his feet will I repose" (*Shirley* 465).

Towards the end of the conversation the master/slave relation reverses and Louis who carves affection and pleads Shirley to speak to him is once more subordinated by Shirley:

> 'My heart craves to be fed. If you knew how hungry and ferocious it is, you would hasten to stay it with a kind word or two.'
> 'Poor Tartar!' said she, touching and patting my hand--
> 'poor fellow, stalwart friend, Shirley's pet and favourite, lie down!' (*Shirley* 465).

In this relationship, Shirley somehow seems to behave more powerfully and influentially than Louis but the situation endlessly oscillates without reaching any conclusion. The first reason could be in order to demonstrate that each person's inherent power and strength is

ambiguous and indeterminate: "It is primarily a means of heightening an ambiguity in relation to power that is at the heart of each individual character". It becomes clear by examining the personality of Shirley and Louis that every human being is "a mixture of dominant and submissive impulses" (Kucich 933).

Moreover, this continually changing outward situation in Shirley's relationship with Louis somehow manifests "an inward instability that defines both characters" (Kucich 932). At first Louis thinks that Shirley is all-powerful, but then he is surprised to see that she has suddenly transformed in spirit and is terrified because of a small bite from a dog. Shirley is also aware that without her Louis will remain a penniless tutor. Although the both characters' inward instability is revealed, we can never decide between conflicting interpretive possibilities about their true nature.

All the ambiguous and transient situations make the different parts and incidents of the story equally attractive and meaningful. There is no ultimate meaning and though the relationships seem to be taking place in a battle-ground and the characters are like competitors, we cannot eventually decide about the winner.

V.III *Villette*;
Meaning Remains Impossible and Undecidable

The protagonist, Lucy Snowe, in a position of near destitution, decides to go to a country that represents Belgium. The country has a different name: Villette. Lucy cannot speak the language and has no employment there. However, she manages, by accident, to find a job at Mme. Beck's boarding school and gradually works her way up into a position of teaching. In the course of the novel, Lucy meets various figures. Two men become candidates for her love interest. The first is Graham Bretton who frequently visits the school as Dr. John and with whom Lucy's love affair falls through. The second is M. Paul, the professor of literature, with whom Lucy falls in love, but their relationship, which seems about to turn into a very happy ending, is disrupted by M. Paul's probable death at sea.

Lucy Snowe is in many ways acting in the way that Shirley does; for example, in seeking out her own ends, and resisting any forms of constraint and surrender. In *Villette*, however, we have a very strange and self-effacing narrator. The narrator here is ambiguous and not very clear; so it is not easy for the reader to be able to identify herself with Lucy. The reader may feel uncomfortable with Lucy since there are many forms of resistance between the reader and the narrator. *Villette* is not a novel that opens itself up easily to the reader (Allott 193-4).

The story is about an English woman who is on the one hand a socially marginal, psychologically illusive and vulnerable character and on the other hand is trying hard to assert her individuality in the context of early 19th century. The two opposite qualities of weakness and strength are involved in forming Lucy's characteristic; "the morbid

sensibility" is blended with "the strength of will, the daring resolution, the quiet power, the discretion and good sense", which are quite inconsistent with each other (Allott 182).

The whole novel and its subject matter are in accordance with Derrida's idea of two-foldedness, with both sides of strength or ambitiousness and vulnerability or timidity functioning together and not preceding each other. While the novel emphatically addresses extreme solitude and loneliness, it simultaneously demonstrates Lucy looking for or focused on love and also trying to balance it with her professional life. These two seemingly opposite sides of Lucy's personality are not mutually exclusive; they work together and make us unable to eventually decide about her real psychology or personality.

Lucy's deep disdain for all things catholic is evident throughout the story and this is what connects most of Brontë's readers to each other. All readers can recognize the spying and the forms of external control (surveillance); these conditions are made part of Catholicism. While Lucy is depicted as being really hostile toward this religion, she is not happy with her own religion, Protestantism, which does not give her any comfort. She confesses her loneliness and unhappiness to the Catholic priest:

> I said I was perishing for a word of advice or an accent of comfort. I had been living for some weeks quite alone; I had been ill; I had a pressure of affliction on my mind of which it would hardly any longer endure the weight (*Villette* 148).

The Derridean point is that, as Allott pointed out, Lucy is not also hopeful, certain and free from doubt about the brightness of the religion she invokes (Protestantism). Two feelings are again at work simultaneously and the meaning remains indecipherable:

She goes out of her way to express a passionate hatred of Romanism. It is not the calm disapproval of a ritual religion, such as we should have expected from her, ensuing upon a presentment of her own better faith. The religion she invokes is itself but a dark and doubtful refuge from the pain which impels the invocation; while the Catholicism on which she enlarges is even virulently reprobated. . . . A better advocacy of Protestantism would have been to show that it can give rest to the weary and heavy laden; whereas it seems to yield no comfort in return for every variety of sorrowful invocation (Allott 174).

The novel begins while its first chapters introduce us to a little, naughty girl, Paulina. Allott thinks that the readers are led to believe that Paulina is the heroine. The story first makes us believe that we are going to read about Paulina's life and marriage and in her and "not in the ill-looking and impassioned imaginary narrator, we had hoped to find the heroine of this novel" (Allott 190).

After nearly six chapters, the plan changes; the narrator abruptly steps into the part of the protagonist, Lucy Snowe, and the story is focused on her life and sufferings while Paulina disappears for several chapters. The *Athenaeum* review described:

We hoped that Currer Bell was going to trace out the girlhood, courtship, and matrimony of such a curious, elvish mite. Instead of this, towards the middle of the first volume the narrator steps into the part of heroine, with an inconsequence and abruptness that suggest change of plan after the tale was undertaken. From this point, we are once again invited to follow the struggles and sufferings of a solitary woman, _ to listen to the confessions of a heart famishing for excitement and sympathy (Allott 188).

From the beginning the story is structured by its own deferment. The deferring indirection technique is at work in the scenes related to Lucy and Paulina's childhood interactions. Little Polly is both depressed

because of her father's absence and hopeful of his return. Lucy does not straightforwardly sympathize with her or soothe her with some consoling words. Lucy just observes her calmly while Polly cries in despair: "I perceived she endured agony. She went through, in that brief interval of her infant life, emotions such as some never feel; . . . Nobody spoke. Mrs. Bretton, being a mother, shed a tear or two. . . . I, Lucy Snowe, was calm" (*Villette* 17).

Lucy's being just an observer or witnesser of Polly's sufferings can have indefinite or indirect meanings; Hughes has offered an interpretation: Lucy's emotional state is represented indirectly through the unpleasant emotional state of another character. Paulina's grief and longing are actually representative of Lucy's sufferings. Lucy shares the same agony as Paulina's and this act of observing Paulina is a kind of introspection or self-scrutiny exercised by Lucy. Hughes explained this suspending situation and said that he saw *Villette* as a novel in which "one attempts to divine in another person the signs of one's own emotionally reduced predicament":

> Caught between hope and despair, Paulina's state of mind itself becomes a kind of circuit or relay of observation into which the reader also enters . . . . Lucy's attention is essentially that of an onlooker, and she refuses to interact with Paulina, even when the tiny girl runs out into the street. Instead, the intensity of her observation, as suggested, indicates that the occasion is one of self-contemplation by other means _ Paulina is a kind of surrogate, and the encounter defines Lucy's need to catch, in the little girl, the vibration of her own affective habits (712-13).

The characters also manifest the use of indirection technique, causing deferral in understanding and interpretation:

M. Paul is rather an ambiguous character. He says that Lucy needs to be watched over; he both feeds her with his love and starves her; he

gives her books and teaches her while he is also threatened by her learnedness; she begins to master the material and then he suddenly begins to check her. As a result, we can never be certain that Lucy could have thrived if she had owned that romantic story forever (in spite of the fact that M. Paul gave her the wonderful present of a beautifully furnished house and school of her own). Brontë chooses to give her the work and holds out the possibility that Lucy could also have her lover return.

Lucy Snowe, even the name, gives us a few little hints as to her character and her manner; she is very cold even with herself: "She is sensible, clever, and somewhat emotional, but she lacks enthusiasm and deep womanly love" (Allott 196). The key characteristic about her is that people barely see her. There is a remarkable passage where Dr. John reappears and fails to recognize her as someone he knew in his youth. However, he fails to recognize Paulina with whom he ultimately falls in love. M. Paul, by contrast, is very stout about character; he can read Lucy accurately. Dr. John is not such a character reader and that is probably the reason why he is the wrong person for Lucy, but we can never be certain about it.

This power of observation is a dominating, key matter in this book which makes our understanding of the characters defer. Most of the characters perform concealing practices toward other characters and try to interpret covertly what the others do or think. Mdm. Beck asked M. Paul to read Lucy's countenance when she first arrives and here is Lucy's first impression of M. Paul's mysterious act of reading her skull: "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" (*Villette* 58). Shuttlewort pointed out this recurrent pattern in the novel, as follows:

> The text of *Villette* is dominated by the practice of surveillance. The constant self-surveillance and concealment which marks Lucy's own narrative account is figured socially in the institutional practices of those who surround her. All characters spy on others, attempting, covertly, to read and interpret the external signs of faces, minds, and actions (*Villette* 714).

Although Lucy appears to the others as a cool woman, she is in fact seizing with passion and that is what M. Paul recognizes about her. There is a sort of deferral around her name; she seems shadowy and she wears a purple-gray dress in the colour of "dun mist" (*Villette* 120), but eventually she shows a sort of shyly wear (pale pink) and M. Paul sees it as scarlet. May be he was right in recognizing the firing and passionate aspects of Lucy and so the snowy exterior is really a kind of mask.

As Kucich pointed out: "Brontë takes great pains to define for us, . . . the nature of this mysterious inward strength" (*Villette* 926). On the one hand, Lucy may see herself as a weak and incapable one, but, on the other hand, she secretly discovers some special talents, abilities, and confidence in herself. Lucy becomes very satisfied with her inward power, though she always tries to conceal it from the others:

> In Villette Lucy Snowe discovers to her surprise that she, too, has a great talent for acting. Hiding behind her dramatic persona in the vaudeville, she is able to invest her acting with her own spirited desires. And in doing so, she discovers that "a keen relish for dramatic expression had revealed itself as part of my nature" (129). . . . M. Paul often accuses her of being a mask, and Ginevra Fanshawe accuses her of being an even better actress than Ginevra herself is. This kind of manipulation becomes a source of great inward satisfaction (Kucich 927).

Lucy is a sort of rebel who strictly resists conversion. Our understanding of surveillance and the external control can be deferred

and pluralized, since surveillance may express less about anti-Catholicism than being a reason to make a rebellious person out of Lucy. She wants to feel proud that she is a Protestant. The observation technique not only shows Lucy's marginality, but also, becomes a sort of language that gives her more room to maneuver.

Lucy's split identity is also emphasized by the symbol of the mirror which appears many times in the novel. Lucy sees herself in the mirror and is astonished by her alienated, altered image:

> A gilded mirror filled up the space between two windows, curtained amply with blue damask. In this mirror I saw myself laid, not in bed, but on a sofa. I looked spectral; my eyes larger and more hollow, my hair darker than was natural, by contrast with my thin and ashen face (*Villette* 154).

> Entering by the carré, a piece of mirror- glass, set in an oaken cabinet, repeated my image. It said I was changed: my cheeks and lips were sodden white, my eyes were glassy, and my eyelids swollen and purple (*Villette* 419).

She could not identify herself with the external ghostly reflection appeared on the mirror. She may believe inwardly in herself as an independent, passionate, lively being but the mirror represented a weak, shadowy, poor and helpless governess. This second artificial identity is imposed upon her or constructed for her by the type of the class and gender she belonged to. Mirror may carry its common meaning as an object in this novel, but we doubt that what Beidler explained as the constructed identity for the governesses in 19th century England may also be true about Lucy's situation:

> Because the reflection is external and discontinuous with us, we experience it as alienated, literally and figuratively Other. This fundamental (mis)recognition is

repeated throughout life: in the words of Fillie Ragland-Sullivan, although the mirror stage 'signals the beginning of a sense of identity, this unity has been found *outside* and, accordingly, the destiny of humans is to (re-)experience ourselves only in relationship to others'. . . . [Here] the mirror can be read realistically as a marker of verisimilitude, or allegorically as a marker of the governess's divided identity. . . . On this view, the governess sees in the glass an alienated gender- and class- inflected identity that has been constructed for her (351-2).

Madame Beck examines every piece of Lucy's clothing when she arrives at the school. She even takes a wax impression of Lucy's keys. This action is somehow understandable since Lucy is a stranger and Madame Beck takes her in. We can also assume that Madame Beck treats all people who come into her school that way: "Madame Beck runs her school according to the watchwords 'surveillance', 'espionage'" (Shuttlewort qtd in Hughes 714). Can we consider her totally an evil character in the novel? The answer is a Derridean one: both yes and not yes.

It is true that she examines all the people around her with scrutiny. She leaves nothing untouched; she polices her own children. This is a part of the representation of institutional surveillance which is partially linked to Catholicism. On the other hand, like most of the figures in this book, Madame Beck is not just an evil character. Allott wrote the claims of *Literary Gazette* review about the characters of *Villette* as follows: "They are all of that mingled yarn which life presents _ none all good, none all bad _ and we therefore take them into our acquaintance as if we had known them" (179).

She becomes Lucy's love rival for both Dr. John and M. Paul and the surveillance aspect is certainly a creepy one but she is also someone that Lucy partially admires for her incredible capability. She is

a kind of model. When Lucy imagines owning her own school and starting very modestly, she thinks that this is how Madame Beck started, and now look at her; she has all these students and all this property. Madame Beck can be a positive model as well as obviously in most ways an anti-model. Here is how Lucy describes this powerful woman:

> I say again, Madame was a very great and a very capable woman. That school offered her for her powers too limited a sphere; she ought to have swayed a nation: she should have been the leader of a turbulent legislative assembly. Nobody could have browbeaten her, none irritated her nerves, exhausted her patience, or over-reached her astuteness. In her own single person, she could have comprised the duties of a first minister and a superintendent of police. Wise, firm, faithless; secret, crafty, passionless; watchful and inscrutable; acute and insensate--withal perfectly decorous--what more could be desired? (*Villette* 66).

Here is another dubious interpretation for Lucy's being under Mme. Beck's constant surveillance and it is related to the "governess's ambiguous class status" and "the strong prejudice against governesses" in the 19th century (Beidler 353). While men were supposed to be occupied with working and earning money, home was the only proper place for a woman to spend her day and perform her domestic duties. A homeless woman without any family but not born in the servile classes had no choice except seeking the occupation of governess in order to earn her living:

> In an essay published in the 1840s . . . Anna Jameson discusses the role of the governess. She emphasizes that, while women of what she calls the 'servile classes' might with relative ease get jobs, for women of a higher class who did not marry and who had to leave their families there was only one occupation possible, that of a governess to a wealthier or higher-class family (Beidler 128-9).

The employers were anxious that "a governess might engage in sexual intrigue either with children or with the master" (Beidler 353). This suspicious and distrustful view of the governesses could have been the reason of Mme. Beck's controlling behavior towards Lucy; Mme Beck saw Lucy as a threat to her imaginary relationship with Dr. John or M. Paul:

> Indeed, the distinction between domestic duty and labor performed for money was so deeply ingrained that 'the figure of the prostitute could be freely invoked to describe any woman who dared to labor for money' (Armstrong). Armstrong's claim is not that governesses were prostitutes, but that in the mind of the public, a working woman was only steps away from the status of the prostitute (Beidler 354).

In searching for the true subject matter of this story we may consider the female ambition and Lucy's claiming her ambitiousness as an essential part of it. By making the reader wonder about the true subject matter, the text arranges its own deferment. As already mentioned, Lucy claims her ambitiousness behind the veil of what looks like to be depression, repression and fear; it is such a Derridean juxtaposition she seems to present. Here are other examples of this juxtaposition:

Lucy's standard reaction to the many characters is along with both uncertainty and ambivalence. She both hates and is drawn to Madame Beck; she is actually like Madame Beck. She is a self-effacing observer and Madame Beck is a cloaked surveyor. There is not that much difference in some ways between the two of them. Allott explains that the protagonist, Lucy, leaves the same double impression upon the mind of the reader. First, she seems to be very cold and repelling but then she wins our love and respect:

> To few will she appear, on first acquaintance, loveable. There is a hardness and cold self-possession upon the surface of her character, somewhat repelling; and it is only when you see, by degrees, into its depths, when she flashes upon you revelations of emotion and suffering akin to the deepest you have yourself experienced, and when you feel what a glow of tenderness and loving-kindness is burning under the unattractive and frigid exterior, that you admit her into your heart (179).

M. Paul is another example of the characters of Brontë endowed with both good and bad qualities and our authoress believed it necessary to "give full effect to the good qualities of M. Emanuel, with which his fierce and domineering temper contrasts, and to make the reader accept him more cordially at the last" (Allott 180). M. Paul's manner and temper may seem frightening at first but these characteristics were artistically transformed along the story; we gradually and willingly begin to like and respect him and we become happy of his true feelings towards Lucy. The recognition process of most of the characters is deferred:

> When Paul first comes upon the stage, the reader does not like him. He has, however, like Rochester, the fascination of power, and when, later in the book, that power is developed, not grotesquely, but nobly, the reader smiles, and willingly puts Lucy's hand in Paul's . . . The skill of the treatment is shown in the gradual melting of the dislike of Paul, until it is entirely replaced by esteem; and this, by no means which seem forced, and which are not quite naturally and easily evolved from character and circumstance (Allott 214).

Though we have a poor and psychologically weak protagonist, the story seems to have a great power, as if Lucy reaches out and says that do not feel sad and sorry for yourself, stand up, be strong and move forward even in the face of doubt and ambiguity. What makes the

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meaning misty or blurred is the way in which the novel talks about losses and the way in which Lucy handles depression and loneliness; she does not cure it nor does she deny it; it seems that she learns to make it her strength.

Villette probably suggests that there are some sorts of things even worse than loneliness. Lucy at one point has the opportunity to be Poly's companion, but she says: "I was no bright lady's shadow_ not Miss de Bassompierre's" (*Villette* 278). Lucy does not want just to be a companion; she wants to have her own life. She does not even want the kind of romantic relationship that Poly herself has where her existence is in another and where she is the helpmate to another. Lucy chooses a kind of self-sufficiency. For example Lucy once mentions that she would rather do hard manual labor, even though that would be downwardly mobile in class terms. That would give her a kind of independence:

> 'I could teach; I could give lessons; but to be either a private governess or a companion was unnatural to me. Rather than fill the former post in any great house, I would deliberately have taken a housemaid's place, bought a strong pair of gloves, swept bedrooms and staircases, and cleaned stoves and locks, in peace and independence. Rather than be a companion, I would have made shirts and starved' (*Villette* 278).

We cannot deny Lucy's horrors of her experience of severe loneliness during her long vacation but at the same time there is a sort of pride in Lucy's independence that she chooses. Lucy is the best representation of Brontë's choice of freedom of thought and her being in a position of both helplessness and hopeful of change. Allott quoted G.H. Lewes's *Leader* review which composed:

> How she [Brontë] has looked at life , with a saddened,

yet not vanquished soul; what she has thought, and felt, not what she thinks others will expect her to have thought and felt; this it is we read of here, and this it is which makes her writing above almost every other writing (185).

Brontë composed in *Villette*:

> 'Peril, loneliness, an uncertain future, are not oppressive evils, so long as the frame is healthy and the faculties are employed; so long, especially, as Liberty lends us her wings, and Hope guides us by her star' (49).

> 'I believe in some blending of hope and sunshine sweetening the worst lots. I believe that this life is not all; neither the beginning nor the end. I believe while I tremble; I trust while I weep' (338).

The reader is not however presented with a clear and normal process of Lucy's reaching the considered freedom and self-sufficiency and many small incidents make more determents within this process. For example, Miss Marchmont's memories of the past, her last night and the visit to London are among the very interesting descriptions of this novel and even may carry some purpose and moral within themselves; but they are somehow unrelated to the main plot and its characters:

> It is quite true that the episode of Miss Marchmont, early in the first volume, is unnecessary, having no obvious connexion with the plot or the characters; but with what wonderful imagination it is painted! Where shall we find such writing as in that description of her last night, wherein the memories of bygone years come trooping in upon her with a vividness partaking of the last energy of life? It is true also that the visit to London is unnecessary, and has many unreal details. Much of the book seems to be brought in merely that the writer may express something which is in her mind; . . . and expresses it as no other can (Allott 211).

The reader may eventually remain undecidable about Lucy's position and personality. *Shirley*, as we read in the previous section, defined personality as "a mixture of dominant and submissive impulses", which paralleled the "conjunction of passion and reserve. The same might be said of Lucy Snowe's alternations between command and subservience" (Kucich 933). Lucy constantly alters her behavior between command and subservience, and makes it difficult for the reader to decide about her personality. She can simultaneously seem powerful and powerless against other characters such as, Mme. Beck, Ginevra and M. Paul. This condition provokes from the reader and Paulina the following comment: "Lucy, I wonder if anybody will ever comprehend you altogether?" (*Villette* 398)

V.IV *Villette*, The Ambiguous Ending

The most remarkable and confusing aspect of this book is the ending. Usually a female protagonist in the situation of Lucy, without any money and without any family, cannot survive in life but she does. There is a metaphor of shipwreck. Lucy falls overboard; she is half drowned, but she survives. The storm metaphor is used for Lucy's unspecified difficulties twice. The first not only foreshadows the ending but also introduces the reader to the device of replacing specific information about Lucy with metaphorical obscurity. The ending storm implies M. Paul's death:

> All sleepless watchers hear and fear a wild south-west storm. That storm roared frenzied, for seven days. It did not cease till the Atlantic was strewn with wrecks: it did not lull till the deeps had gorged their full of sustenance. . . . Peace, be still! Oh! a thousand weepers, praying in agony on waiting shores, listened

for that voice, but it was not uttered--not uttered till; when the hush came, some could not feel it: till, when the sun returned, his light was night to some! (*Villette* 462).

The implication is that M. Paul dies in a shipwreck but Lucy survives and lives to tell the tale. The very last sentence has to do with the fate of her enemies, and the narrator notably refrains from providing a summary of her own ending: "Madame Beck prospered all the days of her life; so did Père Silas; Madame Walravens fulfilled her ninetieth year before she died. Farewell" (*Villette* 462).

Hughes interprets the last sentences of this novel as the author's intention to shift the readers' attention from Lucy, the protagonist, onto the fate of the other insignificant characters. The reason may have been to lighten the dark ending by distracting the reader, but we can never be certain about it. It resembles the way Brontë began the story by focusing on Paulina and the Brettons instead of on Lucy herself:

> Just as, at the beginning of the novel, the narrator shifts attention from her own circumstances onto Paulina and the Brettons, so also, with the closing words of the novel, we hear of the later life of the novel's most marginal characters in place of that of Lucy herself (Hughes 715).

However, the last sentences show that Lucy is presumably still around to tell their stories. She finds work and she finds love, but she does not marry. Lucy, intriguingly, mentions that the years during which M. Paul was away were the happiest years of her life: "M. Emanuel was away three years. Reader, they were the three happiest years of my life" (*Villette* 460).

We cannot know for sure whether M. Paul will come back or not and whether or not Lucy will marry someday, but we can certainly say

that the story does not end in a conventional manner. This ambiguous ending defers and multiplies our understanding and interpretations.

Some readers who have, as Brontë wrote, "sunny imaginations" (*Villette* 462) believe that M. Paul lived. We are told that M. Paul is returning; he has been in the West Indies for three years. Lucy has been running her school and loving his letters and eagerly awaiting return with the idea of marriage in mind. Then we are told about the storm which has been continually hinted at throughout the book (both metaphorical storm and literal storm). We become anxious that the winds are rising and this terrible storm is getting near. The strong implication is that there is a good chance that M. Paul's ship has been wrecked. Then Lucy says:

> Here pause: pause at once. There is enough said. Trouble no quiet, kind heart; leave sunny imaginations hope. Let it be theirs to conceive the delight of joy born again fresh out of great terror, the rapture of rescue from peril, the wondrous reprieve from dread, the fruition of return. Let them picture union and a happy succeeding life (*Villette* 462).

Brontë claims to leave room for those who have sunny and hopeful imaginations. The readers are left with hope since the narrator forebears from giving them more information, but the narrator may have wanted to inform us that the rest of the untold story could trouble the sensitive readers. From this point of view, the ending is clear and unhappy but not specified directly. Readers who do not think optimistically note that there is a passage very like this at the beginning of the book and the ending actually repeats this passage very early on; she says that the reader is free to think of my childhood: "It will be conjectured that I was of course glad to return to the bosom of my

kindred. Well! the amiable conjecture does no harm, and may therefore be safely left uncontradicted" (*Villette* 29).

The technique of indirection is at work at the ending too. Since Brontë had tried to come to terms with her own life and the ways in which she was successful in isolation, she had made up her mind to send M. Paul to death. *Villette* represents "the independent originality of a strong mind nurtured in solitude" (Allott 210). The ending, in this sense, is not actually unhappy; it is just differently positive.

Moreover, the fact that each person has his/her own temperament, which can differ from the others, had been fundamental for Brontë. There are such things as sunny imaginations but hers is not one. Here is how she defined life, as always in contradiction with our expectations: "Life is so constructed, that the event does not, cannot, will not, match the expectation" (*Villette* 383).

She is here recognizing the differences among her readers and leaves room. She believed that temperament is a guiding factor in humans. She has already written the happy ending and it belongs to Paulina and Dr. John. They are blessed with love and happiness: "This pair was blessed indeed, for years brought them, with great prosperity, great goodness" (*Villette* 408).

Actually Paulina and Grahame are another deterring factor in this novel since they attract the readers' attention and prevent them from focusing on the main protagonist and her future destiny with M. Paul:

> The difficulty with the book as a work of art is, that the interest does not sufficiently concentrate upon the two chief figures. Grahame and Paulina are disproportionately interesting. In fact, we are not sure that most readers are not more anxious to marry Grahame than to follow the destiny of Lucy Snowe (Allott 214).

As a result, though Brontë says that she has let the optimists imagine a reunion, she has not specifically given it to us; in fact she has strongly indicated a lonely future for Lucy Snowe. The apparently open ending is the most unconventional and ambigious thing about this novel; the readers may want to decide on a fixed conclusion for this novel, but it is somehow impossible to do so.

CHAPTER VI

MOURNING AND DEATH IN *SHIRLEY* AND *VILLETTE*

This chapter considers Derrida's ideas of death, absence and mourning in Brontë's *Shirley* and *Villette*. For that sake, Derrida's 2001 *The Work of Mourning* is taken as the main source.

VI.I *Shirley;*
Death Affirmed, Mourning Followed in Silence

First, we should recall that for Derrida, all and every work, literary or non-literary, is "the work of mourning. All work in general works *at mourning*. In and of itself" (*The Work of Mourning* 142).

Shirley as a work of mourning consists of many characters bearing proper names. As mentioned earlier in the Introduction part, each name for Derrida carries death. Every person's name and identity have strong, deadly powers and we are actually living as already dead or after ourselves. When Caroline Helstone described Shirley's heart she said that it was "like a shrine, for it was holy; like snow, for it was pure; like flame, for it was warm; like death, for it was strong" (*Shirley* 448).

Is this something that we should feel depressed and miserable about? Derrida answers, No! He has emphatically said that "when I say, 'I love what I have loved,' it is not only this or that thing or person, but rather: I love love, . . . , I want to keep everything. That is my good fortune" (*Points . . . Interviews* 152). Love, for Derrida, contained loss and mortality. What he had loved had been what or whom he had lost

and is absent and what he loved, that was alive, is also mortal and going to be lost someday.

Derrida meant that we can only love what is mortal; the condition of loving someone or something is the mortality of that person or thing. This is not something to be afraid of or depressed about and we should live satisfied with this fact since mourning will never end and has not started from somewhere; it has always been at work from the moment we are born or something is created. The anxiety and expectation is always in our hearts but that should not prevent us from enjoying our lives; this is how it should be. As Caroline explains in *Shirley*:

> I do fear death as yet, but I believe it is because I am young. Poor Miss Ainley would cling closer to life if life had more charms for her. God surely did not create us and cause us to live with the sole end of wishing always to die. I believe in my heart we were intended to prize life and enjoy it so long as we retain it. . . . Nobody in particular is to blame, that I can see, for the state in which things are (*Shirley* 292-293).

Mourning is what "we expect from the very beginning to follow upon the death of those we love. . . . Mourning begins before death" and the effect is deferred. We always think about and mourn both for the others' and our own future death while we are alive. That is why the present is always ghostly (Derrida, qtd in Brault and Naas 12). The following words by Caroline show her very insistence on the subject of death; they imply her inability to ignore death and thus, indirectly, exemplify Derrida's argument: "I am . . . a poor doomed mortal, who asks, . . . to what end she lives; whose mind for ever runs on the question, how she shall at last encounter, and by whom be sustained through death" (*Shirley* 175).

And again we read about Caroline's thoughts about death this time when she is sick in body and spirit. She continually asks the unanswerable questions we all have always in our minds:

> What can my departed soul feel then? Can it see or know what happens to the clay? Can spirits, through any medium, communicate with living flesh? Can the dead at all revisit those they leave? Can they come in the elements? . . . Where is the other world? In what will another life consist? (*Shirley* 316).

The painful experience of death or losing someone or something is a "necessary possibility that structures the very movement of identification. . . of loving oneself or another" (Royle 152). That everyone and everything will disappear, including ourselves, is the reason we feel love toward people or things in life and we can identify them: "Love, for Derrida, is till death us do part, or rather it is on condition that we are in some sense always already parted both from one another and from ourselves" (Royle 152).

In *Shirley* Brontë sketches Mr. Yorke's family with his six intelligent children; two of them are girls, Rose, the elder one, and the little Jessy. The close connection between love and mortality is evident in the father and daughters' affectionate relationship with each other. The father has already begun to mourn in the ghostliness of the present with the knowledge of the future absence of his dear daughters:

> Rose loves her father: her father does not rule her with a rod of iron; he is good to her. He sometimes fears she will not live, so bright are the sparks of intelligence which, at moments, flash from her glance and gleam in her language. This idea makes him often sadly tender to her. He has no idea that little Jessy will die young. . . . She lived through an April day; much loved was she, much loving. She often, in her brief life, shed tears, she had frequent sorrows; she smiled between, gladdening whatever saw her (*Shirley* 113-14).

Mr. Yorke who had been deeply in love with Mary Cave before her marriage to Mr. Helstone confessed that if he knew she would love him forever and if he was "certain of her constancy", he may "have left her" (402). This strange situation can be explained according to Derrida and his idea of the indispensable connection between love and death. We do not find anything or anyone dear and deserving of love unless that thing or person is in the danger of disappearing one day. Mr.Yorke professed: "I believe _I daily find it proved_ that we can get nothing in this world worth keeping, not so much as a principle or a conviction, except out of purifying flame or through strengthening peril" (*Shirley* 402).

The fact that for Derrida the feeling of love continues until death separates two persons is repeated by many characters. Caroline asks her friend, Shirley, to support the man herself truly loves until death since she wants the best for him and knows that Shirley can make him more successful in life: "If I had your power to aid Robert, I would use it as you mean to use it. If I could be such a friend to him as you can be, I would stand by him, as you mean to stand by him, till death" (*Shirley* 200).

And Louis Moore's proposal to Shirley is not without promising the same fact: "I dare live for and with you, from this hour till my death" (464).

As a result, we are always in mourning and it will never come to an end but what is the best way of mourning for the deceased? How can we be most faithful to our losses? As already mentioned, Derrida believed we should both try to keep the memory of those we loved alive within ourselves (to mourn and interiorize the other), and try to acknowledge that they are gone forever, have become other and will always remain other (refusal to mourn). When we lose someone we

love, we should accept that he is "gone forever, irremediably absent . . . for it would be unfaithful to delude oneself into believing that the other living *in us* is living *in himself*" (Derrida, *Memoires for Paul de Man* 21).

We should both mourn and refuse to mourn or keep silent. Mourning in this sense is divided into these two seemingly opposite kinds (semi-mourning), which are inseparable from each other.

By mourning we commit both fidelity and infidelity since we keep the memory of the dead alive within ourselves, but we do not let them become other. Refusal to mourn also contains fidelity and infidelity since although we acknowledge that the deceased are gone forever, we have actually tried to wipe out their recollections or, as Derrida said, "one risks making him disappear again, as if one could add more death to death and thus indecently pluralize it" (*The Work of Mourning* 24):

> The faithful one is someone who is in mourning. Mourning is an interiorization of the dead other, but it is also the contrary. Hence the impossibility of completing one's mourning and even the will not to mourn are also forms of fidelity. If to mourn and not to mourn are two forms of fidelity and two forms of infidelity, the only thing remaining – and this is where I speak of semi-mourning – is an experience between the two. I cannot complete my mourning for everything I lose, because I want to keep it, and at the same time, what I do best is to mourn, is to lose it, because by mourning, I keep it inside me (Derrida, *Points . . . Interviews* 151-152).

In Brontë's novel, refusal to mourn is probably exercised by Mr. Helstone, the rector. He had married a beautiful woman called Mary Cave and had lost her after a few years of marriage. His silence, dry eyes and seemingly indifferent behavior after her death made the other characters and the reader believe that Mr. Helstone was a very cold,

rough and emotionless man. The narrator however strongly implies that he may have exercised refusal to mourn:

> When she [Miss Cave] one day, as he [Mr. Helstone] thought, suddenly _ for he had scarcely noticed her decline _ but, as others thought, gradually, took her leave of him and of life, . . . he felt his bereavement _ who shall say how little? Yet, perhaps, more than he seemed to feel it; for he was not a man from whom grief easily wrung tears.
>
> His dry-eyed and sober mourning scandalized an old housekeeper, and likewise a female attendant, who had waited upon Mrs. Helstone in her sickness, . . . ; they worked each other up to some indignation against the austere little man, who sat examining papers in an adjoining room, unconscious of what opprobrium he was the object (*Shirley* 39-40).

Mr. Helstone kept silent on the death of his wife. He may have also committed infidelity and risked making his wife more disappeared by this reaction. As Derrida explained, "by avoiding all quotation, all identification, all rapprochement even, . . . one risks making him disappear again, as if one could add more death to death and thus indecently pluralize it (*The Work of Mourning* 45). However, there is a scene in the novel indicating that although he did eventually forget her, he had not completely wiped out the memory of his dead wife. Even many years later, when he heard by chance, Mrs. Pryor singing sweetly a hymn for her sick daughter Caroline, he remembered Mary Cave:

> Even old Helstone, as he walked in the garden, . . . , stood still amongst his borders to catch the mournful melody more distinctly. Why it reminded him of his forgotten dead wife, he could not tell; nor why it made him more concerned than he had hitherto been for Caroline's fading girlhood (*Shirley* 319).

At the death of someone we love, we may prefer to keep silent out of respect; on the other hand we have to speak to console our sorrows

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and keep his memory alive in ourselves since this is the last and only tribute we can give them: "Speaking is impossible, but so too would be silence or absence or a refusal to share one's sadness" (Derrida, *The Work of Mourning* 72). We should speak about what the deceased has done, has said or has written while being alive. We should let them speak though, as Derrida believed, we cannot understand them for sure and they are absent and thus unable to confirm our thoughts. Nevertheless it is our responsibility to remember them in this way:

> The substitution of the name for the body, of the corpus for the corpse, appears to be the only chance the dead have left. . . . While the bodies . . . have been spirited away, their bodies of work remain; they remain with us, though it is not certain that we understand them (*The Work of Mourning* 28).

The reality of life is somehow hidden within the speeches and texts of the thinkers who are absent but there is no way to reach the meaning. The meaning of their texts is impossible to be attained and their eternal absence has raised more unanswerable questions about them. Derrida said about Sara Kofman's works after her death: "For me everything still remains to come and to be understood" (*The Work of Mourning* 29). *Shirley* conforms to this situation; reality is depicted as something unable to be reached at unless we are dead and so we are not secured to be happy in this world. "The shores of Reality" are described as follows:

> These shores are yet distant; they look so blue, soft, gentle, we long to reach them. . . . Could we but reach this land, we think to hunger and thirst no more; whereas many a wilderness, and often the flood of death, or some stream of sorrow as cold and almost as black as death, is to be crossed ere true bliss can be tasted. Every joy that life gives must be earned ere it is secured (*Shirley* 73).

The reality of the world, life and death is impossible to be reached at but what we are certain about is that the world changes after absorbing each absence. Each person's death affects us and our world in a new and unique way. As Derrida said in 1990 after the death of Jean-Marie Benoist:

> Death takes from us not only some particular life within the world, some moment that belongs to us, but, each time, without limit, someone through whom the world, and first of all our own world, will have opened up in a both finite and infinite _mortally infinite_ way (*The Work of Mourning* 107).

The one we love takes away with himself both a part of our shared life with him and a part of the whole world we live in. With each death, something in the world comes to an end, is lost and will not be restored anymore. Derrida, who had experienced this feeling many times after the death of each one of his friends, wrote the following sentences in the same year (1990) after the death of Louis Althusser:

> What is coming to an end, what Louis is taking away with him, is not only something or other that we would have shared at some point or another, in one place or another, but the world itself, a certain origin of the world_ his origin, no doubt, but also that of the world in which I lived, in which we lived a unique story (*The Work of Mourning* 115).

And then again after the death of Max Loreau, Derrida repeated the same words about the world's coming to an end:

> I have already lost too many friends and I lack the strength to speak publicly and to recall each time another end of the world, the same end, another, and each time it is nothing less than an origin of the world, each time the sole world, the unique world, which, in its end, appears to us as it was at the origin _sole and unique (*The Work of Mourning* 95).

Brontë who had suffered greatly from the death of her sisters and had felt the irreplaceable gap in the altered world, reflected the same feelings as Derrida's in her novel. Here is how little Jessy's death and absence affected the circle of her family:

> They were merry and social, but they each knew that a gap, never to be filled, had been made in their circle. They knew they had lost something whose absence could never be quite atoned for so long as they lived; and they knew that heavy falling rain was soaking into the wet earth which covered their lost darling, and that the sad, sighing gale was mourning above her buried head (*Shirley* 305).

Pictures or images are very powerful representations of this gap; they represent not only the already dead, but also the alive ones' impending death since "the anticipation of death comes so indisputably to hollow out the living present that precedes it" and also because "mourning is at work, as we know, before death". In other words, "the power of the image as the power of death does not wait for death, but is marked out in everything _ and for everything _ that awaits death" (Derrida, *The Work of Mourning* 151). Death can be seen in every image taken from a mortal being.

In *Shirley*, within the rectory are hung three painted portraits: "the centre one, above the mantelpiece, that of a lady; the two others, male portraits" (164). The Lady was Mrs. Helstone's image, and the two men were Caroline's uncle and dead father's (James Helstone) portraits.

Robert Moore described Mary Cave's portrait drawn in her youth as "too white and lifeless" (*Shirley* 401). The image has already appeared to him to contain signs of her future death. James's portrait who is dead now, as Mrs. Pryor exclaims, is "a graceful head _taken in youth" (166) and compared to the uncle's image who is yet alive, "they

resemble each other" (165). The portraits of the both men were drawn while they were alive.

One portrait belongs to a man who has already died and the other belongs to a man who is going to die someday and watching the resembling pictures, makes one remember this fact. Roland Barthes expressed in his book, *Camera Lucida*, written for his dead mother that "the photograph tells me death in the future" (96). The "catastrophe" of death has both already occurred and not occurred. Barthes continued: "Whether or not the subject is already dead, every photograph is this catastrophe (96).

Images become more effective and penetrating after death. When we remember the image of a dead person with whom we did not have a bright and good relationship in life, our feelings are impressed in a new way; we prefer to forget our dim and cloudy relationship and forgive the dead for the troubles and miseries they had caused for us, since death has now created a vast and immeasurable distance between us and them. Derrida blamed himself for "clouding" his relationship with his friend Jean-Marie Benoist. The crack or the distance that had been formed in their relationship was completely disappeared after Benoist's death. Derrida found fault with himself for behaving in a way "as if death were not keeping watch, as if we were not supposed to see it coming" (*The Work of Mourning* 110).

In *Shirley*, Mrs. Pryor, Caroline's mother, who had suffered a lot in her married life with her dominant and cruel husband, James Helstone, decided to forgive him after his death for all the pain and misery he had caused in her life:

> The grave lies between us. There he sleeps, in that church. To his dust I say this night, what I have never said before, 'James, slumber peacefully! See! your terrible debt is cancelled! Look! I wipe out the long,

black account with my own hand! James, your child atones. This living likeness of you _this thing with your perfect features_ this one good gift you gave me has nestled affectionately to my heart, and tenderly called me "mother". Husband, rest forgiven!' (*Shirley* 323).

Death not only brings sadness and mourning for those alive but also it opens a new dimension of love, tenderness and forgiveness for us. There are both light and darkness mixed into each other. Death can sometimes lessen the sadness and sorrows of life and help us to forgive and being forgiven.

VI.II *Villette;* A Ghostly Story

What the most strikes the reader upon reading and especially rereading this novel is how compellingly strange and ghostly the narrator of this book is. The narrator narrates the story in a self-effacing, odd, peculiar but interesting voice. As is written in *The Critical Heritage*: "Of her three books, this is perhaps the strangest, the most astonishing (Allott 172).

As Derrida has emphasized, "spectral is that which is *neither* alive *nor* dead. . . . The spectre is something between life and death, though neither alive nor dead" (qtd in Wolfreys x). When we speak of a story as being ghostly or haunting, it means that the text "plays on the very question of interpretation and identification" (Wolfreys xi). Something is both present and absent in the story which holds us in suspension and deters the process of interpretation and understanding; this is effective in making the story belong not to a particular age, but to all times.

Villette seems to be the culmination of Brontë's writings and all of Brontë's is within this novel. It is celebrated for its severe and

penetrating tracing of Lucy's psychology; the Gothic atmosphere demonstrates externally how the protagonist is suffering internally. Moreover, Brontë invoked the ghost of the nun in the convent (the woman who was buried alive), so that the reader can feel the intrusion of something 'other' in the story. The other is not however present; the traces are just there which repeat what the reader had read in the past narratives. "To invoke ghosts", as Wolfreys expressed, is "to open a space through which something other returns, although never as a presence or to the present. Ghosts return via narratives, and come back, again and again, across centuries, every time a tale is unfolded. This return, . . . is arguably the trace of haunting itself" (3).

In *Villette*, the ghostly nun in the convent makes the reader remember *Jane Eyre* and the madwoman in the attic. The ghostly movement of *Villette* differently repeats *Jane Eyre*'s; the resemblance is not related to the presence of ghosts, but its absence, since in both cases, there is no ghost, but only its wrongly conceived traces. In *Jane Eyre*, mad Bertha's traces were the unexplained noises, strange laughs and screams in the night, and mysterious outbreaks of fire. She was only visible in ghostly apparitions, gazing at Jane. In *Villette* Lucy describes Comte de Hamal (Ginevra's lover), who was disguised as a nun's ghost, as follows:

> A vague tale went of a black and white nun, sometimes, on some night or nights of the year, seen in some part of this vicinage. The ghost must have been built out some ages ago, for there were houses all round now; . . . Her shadow it was that tremblers had feared, through long generations after her poor frame was dust; her black robe and white veil that, for timid eyes, moonlight and shade had mocked, as they fluctuated in the night-wind through the garden-thicket (96).

What is interesting in *Villette*'s repeated manifestation of spectral is not the ghost itself, but the same effect of "disturbing sensation" (Wolfreys 4) it creates in the reader, as if it is the first time such a story is heard: "It is certainly not the ghost we encounter, and lack of empirical 'proof' does nothing to detract from the story's power to disturb or otherwise to create an uncanny effect" (Wolfreys 4).

This disturbing, haunting but interesting ghostly atmosphere is created in *Villette* by the figure of Mme. Beck's boarding school with many dark rooms. The uncanny feeling is not made palpable by the figure of the ghost itself, but by the strange, mysterious, old and dark scene of the school, the classes and the large school-garden. Lucy describes the rumor about the school:

> There went a tradition that Madame Beck's house had in old days been a convent. That in years gone by— how long gone by I cannot tell, but I think some centuries--before the city had over-spread this quarter, and when it was tilled ground and avenue, and such deep and leafy seclusion as ought to embosom a religious house-that something had happened on this site which, rousing fear and inflicting horror, had left to the place the inheritance of a ghost-story (*Villette* 96).

The strange noises and the appearance of the ghosts have somehow been always associated with doors, staircases, windows and gates. The narratives that consciously or unconsciously draw upon using these "transitional" spaces which connect two other spaces to each other are considered as compellingly ghostly or uncanny narratives. Since ghosts are entities between being present and absent, these "liminal" spaces are the best possible places for their appearance:

> Windows, doors, gates and staircases are transitional and liminal (pertaining to limits, boundaries, and thresholds) spaces suggestive of in-betweenness, of the condition of being between one place and another place _ inside and outside, up and down _ or between one

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state and another state of being. Figurative space is a major resource of literature, and liminal spaces are peculiarly appropriate to narratives about ghosts, since a ghost is both present and absent, and therefore the ultimate emblem of in-betweenness (Beidler 360).

Lucy narrates the place she took refuge to read her letter in privacy, where she encountered the ghost, as follows:

> Taking a key whereof I knew the repository, I mounted three staircases in succession, reached a dark, narrow, silent landing, opened a worm- eaten door, and dived into the deep, black, cold garret. . . . I took my letter; trembling with sweet impatience, I broke its seal. . . . 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 and white; the skirts straight, narrow, black; the head bandaged, veiled, white (*Villette* 227-9).

The staircases, dark, narrow, silent landing, worm-eaten door, deep, black, cold garret and other transitional spaces are the main power of this story in disturbing the reader. The uncanny atmosphere along with its continually disturbing sensation calls for the deferral of decision about the text and its meaning. It makes us so curious and anxious while reading that we are just minutely careful to keep our connection with the course of the story. As Hughes indicated: "curiosity, disappointment, excitement, or anxiety make the reader feel that his or her whole relation to the text is at stake, . . . as if the text might cease to find the means to continue" (716).

VI.III *Villette*;

Mourning Works Throughout the novel

Villette can be considered, in literature, as one of the most powerful and best descriptions of the woes of life and the pain of loss and loneliness. The misery that the reader experiences by reading this story is somehow extreme. Allott quoted two reviews which wrote in 1853: "the book is almost intolerably painful" (172) and that "there is little that is cheerful or consoling" (181).

Thomson also, in his 1981 review, summed up the whole life of Brontë in the following words: "Boredom and suffering do indeed seem to have been Charlotte Bronte's lot for most of her life. . . . To us it reads like a life of almost unremitting misery" (471).

It is also important to recognize that Brontë is trying to come to terms with the great mental and emotional distress and loneliness she experienced after the death of her brother and sisters. In *Villette*, she has created a narrator who hardly tries to be strong and stoical in the face. However, Brontë's ever-present anger of her losses is always palpable in her novels. Lucy said: "If life be a war, it seemed my destiny to conduct it single-handed" (*Villette* 277).

Lucy was very much distressed on the leaving day of M. Paul; she did not know what to do or how to express her anger of his future absence:

> There seems, to my memory, an entire darkness and distraction in some certain minutes I then passed alone _ a grief inexpressible over a loss unendurable. What should I do; oh! what should I do; when all my life's hope was thus torn by the roots out of my riven, outraged heart? (*Villette* 416).

We should not overlook the struggle Brontë experienced with the death of her siblings. Almost all of her siblings predeceased her; some of them when she was quite young. Branwell, Emily, and Anne died in one year and Brontë was writing in the wake of that profound experience of losses. They were a very close family and wrote the fascinating *Juvenilia* together.

Lucy Snowe represents much of Charlotte Bronë herself and one crucial biographical context for this novel is this extreme sense of loss and mourning that Brontë suffered. One of the striking points about this novel which demonstrates the great strength of the narrator and which is one of the reasons why it is harder for people to embrace it, in the way that they embrace *Jane Eyre*, is that Lucy insists upon the primacy of loss, uncertainty and suspense: "Brain and heart are both held in suspense by the fascinating power of the writer" (Allott 178).

Here are some quotations from the novel that indicate how Lucy's life is surrounded with uncertainty and suspense, and how she has already begun mourning for her most probable future loss: "Mourning begins before death, already with friendship" (Derrida, *The Work of Mourning* 12). For example, Lucy calls the week before M. Paul's departure, as the hard week of suspense; she was shocked by the announcement of his departure about which he had not talked to her once before: "As to that week of suspense, with its blank, yet burning days, which brought from him no word of explanation--I remember, but I cannot describe its passage" (*Villette* 414).

Brontë, here, describes how this suspense and uncertainty can be the most tormenting thing in the world and how deep she experiences it:

> I think if Eternity held torment, its form would not be
> fiery rack , nor its nature despair. I think that on a

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certain day amongst those days which never dawned, and will not set, an angel entered Hades--stood, shone, smiled, delivered a prophecy of conditional pardon, kindled a doubtful hope of bliss to come, not now, but at a day and hour unlooked for, revealed in his own glory and grandeur the height and compass of his promise: spoke thus--then towering, became a star, and vanished into his own Heaven. His legacy was suspense--a worse boon than despair (*Villette* 417).

And the following words by Lucy emphasize that almost all of her struggles to free herself from this torturous prison of suspense are in vain. She is already very frightened from the thought of losing M. Paul, which had penetrated into her trembling body. The mourning for loss and absence is already begun in her questioning mind, "even before the unqualifiable event called death" (Derrida, *The Work of Mourning* 46):

After a short and vain struggle, I found myself brought back captive to the old rack of suspense, tied down and strained anew.
'Shall I yet see him before he goes? Will he bear me in mind? Does he purpose to come? Will this day _ will the next hour bring him? or must I again assay that corroding pain of long attent _ that rude agony of rupture at the close, that mute, mortal wrench, which, in at once uprooting hope and doubt, shakes life; while the hand that does the violence cannot be caressed to pity, because absence interposes her barrier!' (*Villette* 447).

Lucy saw death coming and was aware that death is always keeping watch. Derrida called this situation "*demi-mort*" in French, which means "half-dead". We are already half dead since death "lay waiting at every turn, announcing itself between the lines and predestining each name" (Derrida, *The Work of Mourning* 128). While Lucy desperately could feel that her lover was racing to death, other characters had already experienced this terrible loss and a whole part of their lives had come to an end:

Mr. Home, Paulina's father, had lost his wife. Though they were separated, he was shocked by the news of her death, and for many years, he had mourned until "his spirits were seriously affected" (*Villette* 3). Miss Marchmont, a crippled woman for whom Lucy for some time was a companion, had lost her fiancé, Frank, in an accident on a snowy night. She has suffered thirty years of mourning and sorrow after his loss: "Let me now ask . . . why it was taken from me? For what crime was I condemned, . . . to undergo thirty years of sorrow?" (*Villette* 33).

And M. Paul (the literature professor) had lost the young woman he had dearly loved, Justine Marie. His heart had wept for her for twenty years. As the priest said: "It is only the affianced lover, to whom Fate, Faith, and Death have trebly denied the bliss of union, who mourns what he has lost, as Justine Marie is still mourned" (*Villette* 366).

Brontë believed these three (loss, uncertainty and suspense) to be the basic existential conditions of life. That is why her novel ends in the way it does; she kept herself continually connected with an extreme and somehow unnecessary amount of grief; this "needless pain" reached to its climax by "the uncertainty in which we are left as to M. Emanuel's death at the close" (Allott 180). The following sentences selected from *Villette* show Brontë's insistence upon a mournful and sorrowful life:

> A sorrowful indifference to existence often pressed on me [Lucy] _ a despairing resignation to reach betimes the end of all things earthly. Alas! When I had full leisure to look on life as life must be looked on by such as me, I found it but a hopeless desert: tawny sands, with no green fields, no palm-tree, no well in view. The hopes which are dear to youth, which bear it up and lead it on, I knew not and dared not know (*Villette* 143).

Here Brontë asks us not to lie to ourselves and avoid writing the word "happiness" in our life-accounts, instead of its real name, "misery":

> Call anguish--anguish, and despair--despair; write both down in strong characters with a resolute pen: you will the better pay your debt to Doom. Falsify: insert "privilege" where you should have written "pain;" and see if your mighty creditor will allow the fraud to pass, or accept the coin with which you would cheat him. Offer to the strongest--if the darkest angel of God's host--water, when he has asked blood--will he take it? Not a whole pale sea for one red drop. I settled another account (*Villette* 338-9).

Brontë ends her novel leaving us in suspense. She starkly hints that M. Paul dies but it is not entirely certain. Lucy had a strong insistence on uncertainty and that we are likely to suffer more loss, nothing is ever an assured thing and that we are happier when we think we have a lover coming back than when we are sure that he is there: "M. Emanuel was away three years. Reader, they were the three happiest years of my life" (*Villette* 460).

Brontë's reaction to her losses and her addiction to misery and demonstration of extreme grief, sadness and mourning is what Derrida called to "taste a tear" or to "drink the tear". Miss Lucy Snowe "took a savage delight in refusing to be comforted, in a position indeed of isolation and hardship" (Allott 182). Derrida warned us against showing this much liking to mourn:

> We must not *taste* a tear: The act of tasting the tear is a desire to reannex the other; one must not drink the tear and wonder about the strangeness of its taste compared to one's own. . . . One should not develop a taste for mourning, and yet mourn we *must*. We *must*, but we must not like it _ mourning, that is, mourning *itself*, if such a thing exists (*The Work of Mourning* 110).

In *The Critical Heritage* the same idea has been repeated by the *Examiner* review written in 1853:

> We need never forget griefs, but we can break ourselves, if we please, of any habit of keeping our old sorrows obstinately in the gangway of our thoughts . . . Lucy Snowe deals now and then in needlessly tragical apostrophes. Every now and then, in a determined way, some dirge to the burden of 'I can't be happy' sounds from within; and in the last page of the book, when happiness is placed within her reach, and it was in the power of the disposing author of the book to close her story with a charming satisfying picture, [she] . . . spoils it all for no artistic purpose whatsoever, and to the sure vexation of all lookers on (Allott 176-177).

Bronë's representation of extreme emotional states and strange sort of inner-dramas is unprecedented. They exceptionally demonstrate and emphasize Brontë's mournful mind and spirit. Lucy's loneliness brought her desperately in need of others' love and affection. *Villette* is, as Hughes exclaimed, "a profound artistic investigation of the unconscious conditions, habits, logic, and tendencies of a radical and intolerable predicament of lovelessness" (711-12). Here, Lucy is dying to hear a kind word from Paul:

> A cordial word from his lips, or a gentle look from his eyes, would do me good, for all the span of life that remained to me; it would be comfort in the last strait of loneliness; I would take it--I would taste the elixir, and pride should not spill the cup (*Villette* 448).

Tasting a tear or insisting upon mourning and despair has its own dangers; it can be turned on a bad tendency to place the deceased more in the position of 'Other'. Derrida believed that to mourn can also have the positive effect of inspiring us to approach life in the way the dead did. If following the mourning for the dead and trying to remember our personal and unique relationship with them, we also pay tribute to what they accomplished in their lives and how, we will learn a

lot from them. Here is what Derrida did after the death of each of his friends:

> In each case, Derrida at once bears witness to a unique, personal relationship with the deceased and pays tribute to their public life and accomplishments, their words and deeds, sometimes even attempting to draw inspiration from the way they approached life and death in word and deed. Derrida is, of course, well aware of both the danger and the necessity of speaking . . . of the dead. . . Derrida sees in this tendency not simply a form of repression but an affirmation of life (qtd in Brault and Naas 20-1).

Lucy draws inspiration from M. Paul's life as a professor. He was a serious but gentle, honourable and energetic teacher. He was "willful, passionate" and more importantly "he would always have his own way and do as he pleased" (*Villette* 130). In his absence, Lucy affirmed life and ran the school on her own. She was inspired in M. Paul's absence to act as strongly as he did and so marked his unique place in her life forever.

As a result, this going without return of others, leaves for us something very precious: to think and to act. Those left, give us to think forever and learn. Derrida believed this to be a secret between us and them and called it the "best in this life". While we can be aware or unaware, the gift of eternal separation is to give. Derrida composed in his text of mourning for Max Loreau:

> It remains a secret, for me one of the absolute secrets of this life, and of what is best in this life. I say "best in this life" because this very separation never stopped making me think, or giving me to think, and I would like to have received it today as a gift from Max, whether he knew it or not. He knew, to be sure, that what separates _ divides and cleaves _ by the same token also *gives*, and that it is not necessary to know; . . . he knew that the *without return* is necessary in order to give (*The Work of Mourning* 96-7).

Lucy and Paul are separated in the story. Paul will probably never return, but what we are sure is that he gave the best for Lucy to live with. His eternal absence resulted in promises followed by right performances in Lucy's life.

VI.IV Lucy's refusal to mourn

As a reader we may, as described earlier, read this book as not having an uncertain ending and we may think that the narrator is fairly clear in meaning M. Paul to die. If we have this ultimate reading, the only question appears is that why Brontë draws back from saying that. Brontë sends her female protagonist to where we assume is Brussels, Belgium, but she gave it a fictional name, Villette. Conceivably, it has to do with the fact of the biographical background:

> The form of the story, as in *Jane Eyre*, is autobiographical . . . The elements of the characters are the same . . . The experiences of a friendless girl as governess in a boarding house at Brussels, which is obviously the *Villette* of the book (Allott 179).

She taught in Brussels and fell in love with the married schoolmaster on whom possibly Paul Emanuel was based. Brontë was probably veiling her personal sufferings. Moreover, it could have been very difficult and intolerable for her to write openly about M. Paul's death which represented those very dear to her. To talk about the life and death of those very close to us is somehow unbearable and there is nothing, as Derrida affirmed, "more impossible or forbidden" (*The Work of Mourning* 52).

The novel has a very honest and bleak portrait of Lucy's depression. It strikes us while reading the novel that Lucy refuses to

describe, in precise detail, the most difficult incidents of her life including the presumed death of her parents except the loss that closes the novel. We are never informed about the identity of Lucy's family and how they died. Why?

She does not say explicitly that her parents died but she sorts of assume it. There can be two reasons for Lucy's refusal of mourning for them:

There are things set along the way that make it seem as though whoever her kindred are, may be they were not so nice. Lucy is kept apart from her godmother Mrs. Bretton and mentions that impediments raised by others had made it impossible for her to see her godmother for many years: "Of Mrs. Bretton I had long lost sight. Impediments, raised by others, had, years ago, come in the way of our intercourse, and cut it off" (*Villette* 29). The first reason can be this interesting information that even the original family had not have provided her with a happy circle. That is also indicated in her nightmare during a long vacation where she dreams that they are alienated from her in eternity; so a close and affectionate relationship between Lucy and her family was somehow lacking.

The second reason for the absence of these scenes, which makes this absence seem more poignant and meaningful, becomes clear if we consider when Brontë wrote the novel. She wrote after the death of her family members and when there was left for her no happy family circle. The fact that speaking about the death of those we love is very difficult and somehow impossible for us, can be the more probable reason for Lucy's keeping silent about this issue.

Is it a right choice that Lucy remained silent following the death of her parents and the probable death of her lover? As mentioned about *Shirley*, both to speak upon the death of others (to perform the labor of

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mourning) and to keep silent (refusal to mourn) contain fidelity and infidelity within themselves. Derrida explained:

> Two infidelities, an impossible choice: on the one hand, not to say anything that comes back to oneself, . . . to remain silent, or . . . to let him speak. . . . But this excess of fidelity would end up saying and exchanging nothing. It returns to death. It points to death, sending death back to death. On the other hand, by avoiding all quotation, all identification, . . . one risks making him disappear again, as if one could add more death to death and thus indecently pluralize it (*The Work of Mourning* 45).

As a result, on the one hand Lucy's refusal to mourn demonstrates that she has acknowledged that the deceased are gone forever. She has committed fidelity in believing that their departure is without return, but she has also betrayed them since her silence somehow wiped out the recollections of the dead; she did not even once speak about her parent. Actually, once more after their death, Lucy has made them disappear and so has pluralized their absence.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

This thesis has focused on Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley* and *Villette*, not any other of her novels; it is also limited to the only two of Derrida's many interconnected ideas, deferral of meaning and mourning. While concentrating on these selected literary novels and philosophical ideas, this research has excluded other stories by Brontë and many other tempting Derridean ideas because of the limitations for space and time in a master's thesis.

It was realized that *Shirley* and *Villette*, as any other work of literature, are inseparable from the practices, the discourses and language out of which they have arisen. Language, which has a very influential role in our social and individual life, is not something fixed and unified; it is always open to many interpretations. This thesis has demonstrated that, from the beginning to the end, these two literary works were not unified in one certain way; an ultimately identifiable or definable single center around which *Shirley* and *Villette* are organized did not exist.

Derrida believed that if we try to find a definable single center or a single meaning in a text, we have actually restrained our thoughts to two conflicting decisions and limited our choice to one universal thought which is supposed to be the only correct one. From Derrida's point of view interpreting a text, which cannot be interpreted, means to accept that a text both means A and other possibilities which are different from A but are not opposed to A as B:

> Derrida would say that anyone attempting to find a
> single, homogeneous or universal meaning in a text is

simply imprisoned by the structure of thought that would oppose two readings and declare one to be right and not wrong, correct rather than incorrect. In fact, any work of literature that we interpret defies the laws of Western logic, the laws of opposition and noncontradiction. From deconstruction's point of view, texts don't say "A and not B." They say "A and not-A. (Norris 50).

The concept of undecidability, which exists in the nature of any text, was seen at work in *Shirley* and *Villette*. From the very beginning, *Shirley* made a complete understanding of its titles and characters impossible. The strange title *Shirley* (a suitable name for males) and the presence of three useless curates right at the first chapter, *Levitical*, had already begun dismantling the novel. Many deterring incidents and characters kept us continually in the threshold as if we would never confront the real story. They were uneasily combined with the fate of the two heroines and their different and questionable relationships with the two brothers in the story.

The structure of *Shirley* displayed to have no firm and solid ground. On the one hand, it ended up in two seemingly happy marriages and on the other hand the possibility of having a happy married life was strongly doubted and scorned in the speeches of the characters. Another Derridean point was the reference of *Shirley* to the other stories like *Jane Eyre* (the tale of a governess and her master) and *Mary Barton* (the hostile relation between the manufacturers, the masters and employers). The beginning was both absent in *Shirley* and present within its new context and structure.

Eventually the misleading and problematic conversations between Shirley and Louis made it impossible to decide if their marriage would be a pure and happy one, the one free from making each other descend into an inferior position or trying to dominate one another, or

not. The text held back the answer to the question of on whose part the power rested. Following the threads led us to different views of the same novel.

The inescapable and impending death also gave a sense of uncertainty to the both couples' everlasting happiness. Their lives were shadowed by the possibility of death. However, we learned from Derrida that the fear of loss and mortality is at the same time the actual reason for the existence of love; loving someone or something is only possible when we are aware of their future loss. Therefore we have begun mourning before death and in the ghostliness of present.

Mourning also continues after death since each death takes away from us a part of our world. Little Jessy's death in *Shirley* left the mournful family of Mr. Yorke with an eternally irreplaceable gap in their lives. Mourning upon the death of others, as Derrida informed us, is of two kinds: to speak and to keep silent. Both ways contain fidelity and infidelity within themselves and Mr. Helstone, by refusing to mourn after the death of his wife, had both betrayed her memory since he had risked making her totally disappear and on the other hand he had committed fidelity by letting her become other.

Villette represented a protagonist whose identity remained unidentifiable and the open deadly ending established conflicting but equally plausible meanings between which it was impossible to decide:

> Undecidability, as de Man came to define it, . . . is an intrinsic feature of the text. . . . The formalist critic ultimately makes sense of ambiguity; undecidability, by contrast, is never reduced, . . . although the incompatible possibilities between which it is impossible to decide can be identified with certainty (Norris 53).

Our efforts to master a text that cannot be mastered is however necessary but impossible. A text functions as a ghost and ghostliness

can be understood as "a metaphor for the mysterious illusiveness of a masterpiece that at once baffles and beckons us" (Beidler 362). *Villette* had been a good exemplary narrative of the ghostly effects of reading and writing.

> All reading is necessarily misreading _ . . . because any reading is partial and incomplete, since it privileges some textual evidence while ignoring other evidence in the interest of advancing a particular theory about the text. . . . Jacques Derrida has written that a "masterpiece always moves, by definition, in the manner of a ghost" (Derrida, *Specters of Marx* 18) (Beidler 362).

Lucy Snowe and the ultimately irresolvable and ambiguous fate of M. Paul made us better understand why "deconstructors reach points in their readings at which they reveal, but cannot decide between, incompatible interpretive possibilities" (Norris 54). We saw Lucy both desperate and hopeful, cold and passionate, weak and strong, and she reacted to the other characters with both uncertainty and ambivalence. The novel simultaneously addressed extreme solitude or loneliness and demonstrated Lucy momentarily focused on love. We also comprehended that the signs of Lucy's emotional state were indirectly presented through Paulina's sufferings as a child.

The effect of the most of the characters' split personalities was deferred and divided; M. Paul was depicted as being both harsh and kind and, Mme. Beck was represented as both a negative examiner and an admirable powerful woman. The characters were neither heroes nor villains; their nature was in accord with Derrida's idea of two-foldedness and carried the vicious impulses and meritorious qualities along each other. The complex personalities created an uneasy feeling in the reader's mind, the feeling of not being told everything.

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Uncertainty, suspense, and of course loss were very much insisted in *Villette* and we saw that Lucy's mind and heart had already begun mourning for the ending loss and absence. By reading Lucy's life story, we perceived how extremely Brontë had connected her life with grief and mourning. Derrida warned us against this much drinking of tear and believed that we must mourn but must not like to mourn.

As a result, the written language, the speeches, the plot and the nature of the sketched characters in *Shirley* and *Villette* could not provide the whole means to control and understand them and ultimately the texts remained unreadable, if, as Norris defined, "reading means reducing a text to a single, homogeneous meaning".

Each reader, as Norris said, quoting Derrida, is an "autobiographic-encyclopedic navigator"; it means that every reader of Brontë's novels understands the story according to his/her past personal life and experiences in literature; every reader's understanding "stems from patterns of association grounded in personal autobiographical (including literary) experience" (Norris 62).

"A context, always, remains open, thus fallible and insufficient" (Derrida, *Specters of Marx* xvii). Derrida always recognized the openness of a work of art and its being unpredictable. He considered this as a positive characteristic of all texts since they are able to surprise us by holding something in reserve. Derrida tried to pay tribute to the works of the deceased by demonstrating what these works have taught us, but more importantly by posing some unanswerable questions that these works have opened up and left us. Derrida believed in these questions' power to keep the text open and so alive forever. The questions guarantee a future for a text, so that it will be taken up and be read in any time by any generation. Derrida concluded his text on Foucault as follows:

> What we can and must try to do in such a situation is to pay tribute to a work this great and this uncertain by means of a question that it itself raises, by means of a question that it carries within itself, that it keeps in reserve in its unlimited potential, one of the questions that can thus be deciphered within it, a question that keeps it in suspense, holding its breath _ and, thus, keeps it alive (*The Work of Mourning* 88).

The independent and original mind of Charlotte Brontë has always had something to tell and she has been among the few people whose voice has made innumerable echoes. Her writings have opened up and left us many questions which have kept and will continue to keep her novels alive forever:

> We could go on quoting and commenting through several pages, for indeed it is . . . the utterance of an original mind. In this world, as Goethe tells us, 'there are so few voices, and so many echoes'; . . . so few persons thinking and speaking for themselves, so many reverberating the vague noises of others. Among the few stands *Villette*. In it we read the actual thoughts and feelings of a strong, struggling soul; we hear the cry of pain from one who has loved passionately, and who has sorrowed sorely (Allott 211).

This study was focused on literature and its being dynamic or having a constantly changing nature. Derrida refused to believe in the existence of the static statuses and it was by use of this idea that I could say a meaning was both present and not present in the novels. Meaning is always engaged in the movement of trace. Here I would like to suggest Derrida's concept of 'trace' for further research which is one of his most central ideas and the only thing that has remained out of the dynamic process of self-deconstruction.

The idea of trace can be investigated in *Villette* since the extraordinary, almost allegorical, use of letter writing and correspondence is very much connected to trace and archive.

We can consider not only literature but also the whole life as trace; life has an intrinsic value while at the same time it always refers to or represents something else. Both literature and life are like a pendulum wavering between manifesting their unique nature and representing the absences which pluralize their own nature. These paradoxes can also be further read about which will lead to Derrida's idea of 'threshold' and his best example of 'labyrinth'.

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APPENDIX A

TEZ FOTOKOPİSİ İZİN FORMU

ENSTİTÜ

Fen Bilimleri Enstitüsü	☐
Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü	☒
Uygulamalı Matematik Enstitüsü	☐
Enformatik Enstitüsü	☐
Deniz Bilimleri Enstitüsü	☐

YAZARIN

Soyadı : Ronaghzadeh
Adı   :   Samindokht
Bölümü : İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı

TEZİN ADI (İngilizce): The Application of Derrida's Ideas of Mourning and Deferral of Meaning to Brontë's Shirley and Villette

TEZİN TÜRÜ :   Yüksek Lisans ☒   Doktora ☐

1. Tezimin tamamı dünya çapında erişime açılsın ve kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla tezimin bir kısmı veya tamamının fotokopisi alınsın. ☒

2. Tezimin tamamı yalnızca Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi kullancılarının erişimine açılsın. ☐

3. Tezim bir (1) yıl süreyle erişime kapalı olsun. ☐

Yazarın imzası   Tarih