

Ambivalence in Love A Study of the Two Heroines in Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley*

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Abstract: The present paper attempts to analyse the characters of the two heroines in Charlotte Brontë's third novel, *Shirley*, based on Karen Horney's theories of personality. At one level, they are a striking contrast to each other. Caroline Helstone belongs to the 'self-effacing' type as described by Horney, while Shirley falls under the 'narcissistic' type categorised under personalities who display expansive tendencies. At the same time, both betray the presence of contradictory impulses owing to the presence of 'basic anxiety' within. This manifests itself particularly when they fall in love - there is a compulsive desire for love and at the same time, a fear of losing their identities. This produces a great deal of ambivalence in their relationships with their lovers, Robert and Louis Moore. Though the novel does end with the marriages of the two heroines to their respective partners, it does not produce the 'they lived happily-ever-after' effect that her earlier novel, *Jane Eyre* produced.

Keywords: 'women in love', self-effacing, expansive, ambivalence

"I believe grief is, and always has been my worst ailment. I sometimes think if an abundant gush of happiness came on me, I could revive yet." (Brontë 438-439) This statement by Caroline Helstone in *Shirley* seems to be an appropriate expression of Charlotte Brontë's emotional problems. And the "abundant gush of happiness" that came to her after the success of *Jane Eyre*, certainly buoyed up Brontë's spirit and gave her much needed self-confidence, as has been mentioned by biographers like Winifred Gérin. (Gérin 340) The relaxed and light-hearted tone with which her second published work, *Shirley* begins, definitely, reflects a happy frame of mind. Brontë appears to be emerging from her self-centredness, as we do not have a character resembling the author at least physically (although Caroline does share some of Brontë's emotional problems). Although the love interest in the novel outweighs all the other aspects, *Shirley* is the most socially conscious of Brontë's works.

But we see a sudden change of tone half-way through the book, probably triggered by the deaths of Branwell, Emily and Anne in 1848-49. It takes on "a graver, more reflective tone" as Winifred Gérin observes (Gérin 389). The book that was started as a mirror of Yorkshire society in Napoleonic times, without narrowing its scope totally, comes down to a more personal level. As Robert Heilman observes, "Miss Brontë loses interest in the public and slides over into the private" because of her "inability to escape from inner urgencies that with centrifugal force unwind outwardly into story almost autonomously." (Gregor 101) A more important theme emerges, important because of its universality - *Shirley* is, in Gérin's words, "... a book about the predicament of women - women in love, women suffering from unrequited love, women who have never, and never will be loved." (Gérin 394) The story is primarily woven around the two "women in love" Caroline Helstone and Shirley Keeldar, and their lovers, Robert, and Louis Moore, and is told primarily from Caroline's detached perspective.

"To her had not been denied the gift of beauty, it was not absolutely necessary to know her in order to like her; she was fair enough to please, even at the first view." (75) is the narrator's opinion of Caroline. Attractive and well-dressed, unlike her predecessor *Jane Eyre*, Caroline Helstone has no worries regarding her looks. Yet we are told that Caroline often carries a sense of inferiority where her attainments were concerned. She generally comes through as a shy and self-effacing person, uneasy in society for Brontë tells us, "She was always held back by the idea that people could not want her - that she could not amuse them..." (211). It is obvious that Caroline's childhood circumstances have been the cause of this "basic anxiety". Being the only child of parents estranged because of her father's dissolute behaviour, she has no pleasant memories of her childhood. While she does

not even remember her mother, when she does think of her father – “a dark recollection it was.” (104). From the servants, all that she can gather is that “he was not a good man”, and that he was “never kind to her.” (104). We are told that her one great longing throughout childhood and later, was to behold her unknown mother and to hear her say” “Caroline, my child, I have a home for you: you shall live with me. All the love you have needed, and not tasted from infancy, I have saved for you carefully ...” (330). But she has to wait for a long time for this desire to be fulfilled.

Brought up by a stern uncle in a cloistered set-up, hers is an existence which Rose Yorke describes as “a long, slow death in Briarfield Rectory.” (409). The gnawing desire for affection remains unfulfilled throughout childhood. Reprieve comes only at the age of eighteen in the form of her cousins, Hortense and Robert Moore. Robert, with his strong, impressive, manly bearing, casts a spell on the girl who has just attained adulthood (as Rochester did on Jane Eyre). We find the “self-effacing” type of personality (Caroline) being fascinated by the “expansive” type of personality (Robert) as described by Karen Horney in her work, *Neurosis and Human Growth*. As Shirley tells Caroline, “Submissive and contemplative yourself, you like the stern and the practical.” (231).

Robert, with his arrogance, intelligence and knowledge of the world becomes a source of vicarious satisfaction for the diffident, restless Caroline, who craves for a more eventful life. With all her timidity and placidity, Hortense finds Caroline “not sufficiently girlish and submissive.” (67), although she acknowledges that Caroline is usually “most tranquil, too dejected and thoughtful indeed sometimes.” (67). Shirley, too, remarks on this quality in Caroline: “... you are a peculiar personage: quiet as you look, there is both a force and a depth somewhere within not easily reached or appreciated...” (267-268). It is clear that Robert, therefore, serves as an object for “externalising” her own, submerged “expansive” drives. Robert's approbation and kindness draw Caroline out of her shell and with him, she displays a vivacity and confidence, which we rarely see in her otherwise. Although she is frank and forthright while criticising him for his faults, Robert nevertheless becomes the cynosure of her eyes. While comparing him with his brother Louis, “she acknowledged a

steady, manly, kindly air in Louis: but she bent before the secret power of Robert.” (425).

But Robert, plagued as he is by his own neurotic problems and ambition, can scarcely be expected to remain Caroline's source of salvation and self-realisation for too long. His inconsistent behaviour and the chilling indifference that he displays from time to time, cut her to the core. However, she attempts to cultivate a mask of indifference and repress her emotions. In Brontë's words, she attempts to learn to “digest” a “stone” or even accept a “scorpion” and “let it sting through your palm” and “to endure without a sob”, believing that it would leave her “stronger, wiser, less sensitive.” (106-107). But, gradually, the compulsive nature of Caroline's attachment to Robert draws out morbid reactions from her. Caroline tells herself: “I have loved, do love and must love him. I would be his wife, if I could; as I cannot, I must go where I shall never see him. There is, but one alternative - to cleave to him as if I were a part of him, or to be sundered from him wide as the two poles of a sphere. Sunder me then, Providence. Part us speedily.” (264-265).

In the absence of a chance to achieve total unity/merger with the partner through total self-surrender, Caroline tries a different type of self-surrender. She attempts to overcome her grief by plunging herself completely in social work. On being questioned by Shirley as to whether such labour by itself is capable of making a human being happy, Caroline's answer is “No; but it can give varieties of pain and prevent us from breaking our hearts with a single tyrant master torture.” (232), which shows the negative, masochistic nature of her philanthropy. Caroline, herself, realises the unhealthy, neurotic nature of the desire for self-renunciation when she states that: “Undue humility makes tyranny; weak concession creates selfishness.” (180). Commenting on Simon Stylites and Bheeshma (whom she alludes to as “the Hindoo votary stretched on his couch of iron spikes”), she feels: “Both these having violated nature, their natural likings and antipathies are reversed: they grow altogether morbid...” (400-401). Like Jane Eyre, Caroline emphatically concludes that “God surely did not create us, and cause us to live, with the sole end of wishing always to die.” (401). She finds “a terrible hollowness, mockery, want, craving in that existence which is given away to others.” (180) and concludes

that her existence was now becoming a “useless, blank, pale, slow-trailing thing...” (401)

Caroline senses that such self-abnegation is just not her cup of tea - a life like Miss Ainley's although “pure and active” seems to her “dreary because it was so loveless - to her ideas, so forlorn.” (189). Self-surrender in love is one thing, but Miss Ainley's self-sacrifice is quite another. Love, still, is the be-all and end-all of all existence for her - “Love is real, the most lasting - the sweetest and yet the bitterest thing we know.” (388), she asserts. And this, despite, all the vehement advocacies of celibacy made by Rev. Helstone, and by Mrs. Pryor who calls love a “cheat”, something “strong as death” (388), which certainly seems to be true in Caroline's case. Caroline, too, begins to see it in a more and more negative and morbid light - “Love hurts us so, Shirley: it is so tormenting, so racking and it burns away our strength with its flame...” (268), comments Caroline at one point.

Love, her “tyrant master-torture” proves more potent than her renunciatory efforts, and inner trauma leads to a gradual wasting away of the physique. The narrator tells us: “... she wasted, grew more joyless and more wan; ... her memory kept harping on the name of Robert Moore.” (190). Shirley's intimate friendship, far from assuaging Caroline, only intensifies the torment by creating a deep sense of jealousy. For she sees in Shirley a potential rival, endowed as Shirley is with greater physical charms, charisma, wealth, and social status. If the feeling is never overtly expressed, it is only because a feeling such as jealousy is inimical to a “self-effacing” person's image of self. G.H. Lewes, clearly, missed this point when he commented that it is “incredible” that Caroline “never once feels the sharp and terrible pang of jealousy.” (Allott 168) Shirley senses the life-consuming nature of Caroline's hidden passion when she remarks: “... there is a sort of unhappiness which not only depresses, but corrodes - and that, I fear, is your portion ...” (268).

Horney's view is that a neurotic of this type, despite anxiety and despondency resulting from the lover's withdrawal, continues to cling to the notion that “one day he will love her.” (Horney 253). We certainly see this in Caroline's case. There is all along a physical and mental disintegration that we see in her, along with a morbid dread of remaining an old maid. But the real breakdown comes only after her fears about Robert and Shirley are confirmed by Hortense's banter when

Shirley sends some flowers to Hollow's mill. Bereft of the slim thread of hope which probably sustained her, she falls ill with a fever that brings her to the brink of death; precisely as Horney mentions in *Neurosis and Human Growth* - “She may fall ill and succumb to her illness.” (257). In the complete absence of a will to live, recovery seems impossible. It is a little difficult to agree with Cynthia Linder who opines that “Caroline's illness is due to her great dissatisfaction in life, and not to her unrequited love.” (Linder 96) Mrs. Pryor describes the psychosomatic nature of the illness when she tells Caroline: “... your mind, Caroline: your mind is crushed; your heart is almost broken: you have been so neglected, so repulsed, left so desolate.” (438). Yet, Caroline does manage to extricate herself from “The Valley of the Shadow of Death” (as the chapter is entitled by Brontë). Caroline, rightly, conjectures that only “an abundant gush of happiness” (439) could rekindle her zest for life and help her recover.

And this fount of happiness comes, not in the form of her beloved Robert, but in the form of her long-lost, longed for mother, who turns out to be none other than Mrs. Pryor. Her immediate reaction to the news is: “But if you are my mother, the world is all changed to me. Surely I can live - I should like to recover,” (440). The tender care with which Mrs. Pryor nurses her, and the close relationship struck up between mother and daughter, give her the security which she badly needs, and herald a speedy recovery. Not only is there a return of physical health but a gain of mental health. John Maynard feels that “the regression to mother is presented as an important step towards possession of a maturity that does not need love compulsively.” (Maynard 155) Another critic, Jacob Korg believes that: “Having discovered her identity in a literal sense, she is able to free herself from doubts about her ultimate destiny.” (Korg 135) Her freedom from “morbid dependency” is clear when she refuses to marry Robert if it means separation from her mother - “I cannot desert her, even for you” (661) is her firm answer, although she still loves him as much as ever. This is a sign of her mental health and independence, and not as John Maynard suggests, “some final distrust of Robert on Caroline's part.” (156) Her love, no longer, has the self-destructive quality it previously had. It is a chastened and more self-confident Caroline who marries a much-chastened Robert Moore at the end of the novel.

Keeping the element of social reformation in mind, many critics look on the character of Shirley Keeldar as “Charlotte Brontë’s visualisation and illustration of the emancipated woman...” (Linder 85) Gilbert and Gubar look on Shirley as “Caroline’s double, a projection of all her repressed desire” for “what Shirley does is what Caroline would like to do” (Gilbert and Gubar 382) R.B. Martin feels that Brontë, here, “splits the consciousness that Jane represents into two parts, assigning that of the too-romantic young girl to Caroline, that of the tougher, more rational woman to Shirley.” (Martin 122) Yet, given the dualistic nature of many of Brontë’s characters, it is difficult to detect any such simple pattern in her novels. Shirley Keeldar is not only the most ambivalent character in the novel, but also the most enigmatical character we come across in the whole of Charlotte Brontë’s work. Even her facial features seem to connote an idea of mystery when the narrator opines: “... mobile they were and speaking; but their changes were not to be understood, nor their languages interpreted all at once.” (205). Louis Moore apostrophizes her as a “... Peri! too mutinous for heaven - too innocent for hell!” (537); he considers her to be “a modest little child” (502) at one moment, and “pale and lofty as a marble Juno” (502) the next. If we make allowances for the element of glorification in this portrait, what Louis Moore is emphasising here is the ambivalent streak in Shirley’s nature.

Given all these dimensions, Gilbert and Gubar feel that Shirley fails to live up to her promise and provide the desired release, and “instead, she herself becomes enmeshed in a social role that causes her to duplicate Caroline’s immobility.” They conclude that “she finally succumbs to Caroline’s fate. And for all her assertiveness, she is shown to be as confined by her gender, as excluded from male society, as her friend.” (383) One feels that the reasons given by them for Shirley’s failure to live up to expectations are rather insufficient. The reasons for her failure are psychological, rather than social (although we agree that society plays a very important part in conditioning the psyche of an individual). If we detect submerged “self-effacing” drives beneath Shirley’s strong exterior, it has nothing to do with gender. As Horney has clearly proved in her work *Neurosis and Human Growth*, “self-effacement has nothing to do with femininity nor aggressive arrogance with masculinity.” (243). This is the folly that even

seasoned critics such as R.B. Martin commit while labelling Shirley as “aggressively masculine” (126) or “half woman, half man.” (138) Notions of gender get attached to these drives only because of widespread social acceptance, and popular beliefs of what constitutes normalcy amongst men and women. Shirley, once, confesses: “... I am neither so strong nor have I such pride in my strength as people think, Mr. Moore...” (524), which shows that the self-assertiveness that we see in her is not real, but indicative of “expansive” tendencies. The reason for the origin of “expansive” drives in her are not very difficult to fathom.

Orphaned at an early age, Shirley, by virtue of her inheritance and social standing has learnt to play the part of “the lady of the manor” from childhood onwards. She has learnt to lead and dictate at an age when she, probably, would have preferred to be taken care of. Even the uncle who has brought her up, treats her with a certain amount of deference and awe, as does Mrs. Pryor. Even Louis Moore, who, we gather, behaved in an informal manner with her earlier, withdraws from her when she attains adulthood. Cut off from others by her superior social standing, Shirley’s only solace in warding off her loneliness, probably, lay in putting on a show of independence and self-sufficiency, and enjoying the privileges of the *heiress*, playing the role allotted to her by fate and society. This becomes her defence mechanism to ward off the feeling of “basic anxiety”.

Endowed as she is with beauty, intelligence and charisma, and an abundance of money and a high social status, Shirley has the world at her feet. We find in Shirley several characteristics of the outgoing “narcissistic” type of personality as described by Karen Horney - she is “gifted beyond average”, and has the “buoyancy and perennial youthfulness”, and the “often-fascinating charm” of the “narcissistic” type. (Horney 194). These qualities in themselves suffice to win her admiration and cast a spell on all those who move in her orbit. It is rather difficult to agree with Sydney Dobell when he pronounces that: “To make Shirley Keeldar repulsive, you have only to fancy her poor.” (Allott 282) Of course, her elevated rank in society is an additional asset to her for it enables her to meet men on an equal footing, as Shirley’s own words indicate: “I am an esquire: Shirley Keeldar, Esquire, ought to be my style and title. They gave me a man’s name: I hold a man’s position: it is

enough to inspire me with a touch of manhood...” (207) And this inspiration is reflected in her ability to talk on supposedly male topics such as business and politics, and in the tremendous physical courage she displays. By her own account, she was able to face an angry red bull quite calmly. Even that diehard chauvinist Rev. Helstone, not only addresses her as “Captain Keeldar”, but has enough confidence in her to assign her the task of protecting his house with a pair of pistols.

And yet, what makes her so attractive to men is the fact that, despite her astuteness and fearlessness, she manages to remain perfectly feminine - as Henry Sympson puts it, she is “... so fair and girlish: not a man-like woman at all - not an Amazon, and yet lifting her head above both help and sympathy.” (513). Dobell might have been more correct if he had said that men would have found Shirley repulsive had she been less graceful externally. A certain childlike simplicity, easy adaptability and an ability to make herself agreeable to everyone, helps her dominate even firebrand chauvinists like Rev. Helstone without giving offence. As Robert Moore points out: “You know the surest path to the heart of each swain, I doubt not.” (318). The streak of tolerance in the “narcissistic” type helps to make Shirley popular, for “till a man had indisputably proved himself bad and a nuisance, Shirley was willing to think him good and an acquisition, and to treat him accordingly.” (304).

Her general benevolence and easy-going indolence of nature help her to mask the desire to dominate, which however comes through from time to time as the following passage shows – “She bade them good-morning with a certain frank, tranquil ease – the natural characteristic of her manner when she addressed numbers; especially if those numbers belonged to the working-class: she was cooler amongst her equals and rather proud to those above her.” (363). The last part of the passage, certainly, indicates a kind of insecurity in her which makes it imperative for her to retain her position of superiority. It is often apparent that although Shirley displays no snobbishness or arrogance with regard to her social status or gifts, she is perfectly conscious of her superiority and will play second fiddle to none.

We also see in her the desire to play the role of a leader - “the anointed”, “the great giver”, “the benefactor of mankind” that Horney describes as a feature of the “narcissistic” type (194). On hearing martial music,

Shirley's being is flooded with a fiery zeal, and she mentally dons the mantle of a ‘knight-in armour’ - “I almost long for danger; for a faith – a land - or at least, a lover to defend.” (310), she tells Caroline. A similar kind of feeling draws her to Caroline initially. The narrator tells us: “In Caroline, Miss Keeldar had first taken an interest because she was quiet, retiring, looked delicate and seemed as if she needed someone to take care of her.” (227). But, if Shirley starts the relationship with a well-masked patronising attitude, she gradually learns to respect Caroline for her originality of mind. However, given Shirley's natural self-assertiveness as opposed to Caroline's self-effacement, Shirley, generally remains the dominant partner in the relationship even after they become intimate friends. Another statement by Shirley herself reveals the point that Horney has made - “One could have loved Cowper if it were only for the sake of having the privilege of comforting him.” (230).

Her philanthropy, too, stems partly from the desire to play the role of “the great giver” and “benefactor of mankind.” We are told that “she cannot be charitable like Miss Ainley - it is not in her nature.” (330). Shirley, herself, is aware of this and “it relieves her to feel that there is another way of being charitable.” (303). This is not to say that Shirley does not possess natural warmth of heart. She does, and she also shows her fairmindedness in her understanding of the psychology of the poor when she voices these feelings – “I cannot forget, either day or night that these embittered feelings of the poor against the rich have been generated in suffering.... To allay this suffering, and thereby lessen this hate, let me, out of my abundance, give abundantly...” (272). Yet, she makes it quite clear that she will never let them dictate to her - her sympathy for them would simply evaporate if they tried to rise against her. “I am no patrician, nor do I regard the poor around me as plebeians; but if once they violently wrong me or mine, and then presume to dictate to us, I shall quite forget pity for their wretchedness and respect for their poverty in scorn of their ignorance and wrath at their insolence.” (272), she affirms.

She tries to rationalise for her desire to fight the poor by describing it as emanating from her “landed proprietor: and lord-of-the manor conscience”, (269), whereas her “private conscience”(269), tells her that it is wrong. Obviously, the conflict arises out of the discrepancy between the “actual” self and her

"idealized" self – there is a conflict between her natural desire to dominate, and her desire to project the image of a warm, sympathetic, benevolent person. The latter, as Horney tells us, is an inseparable part of the idealized image of the "narcissistic" person: "He gives the impression to himself and others that he 'loves' people". (194). We have ample proof of this in Shirley's case. We find a similar kind of conflict operating in all her relationships, and in her attitude towards love and marriage. For a woman as spirited, original and independent as her, her views on men and marriage are curiously old-fashioned and seemingly indicative of "self-effacing" tendencies. An attitude of deification is apparent when she tells Caroline: "Indisputably, a great, good, handsome man is the first of created things", and "I would scorn to contend for empire with him." (221). She adds: "Nothing ever charms me more than when I meet my superior - one who make me sincerely feel that he is my superior." (221-222) All this is evidently, in keeping with her idealised self-image. While Shirley is capable of appreciating all that is good and great, and respecting people whom she considers worthy of her respect – people like Mrs. Pryor, Louis Moore and even Robert Moore to a certain extent, we realise that all this is possible only as long as they do not take any unnecessary liberties with her. If anyone dares to be presumptuous, Shirley does lash out forcefully as Mr. Donne, Mr. Yorke, Robert Moore and Mr. Sympton realise much to their chagrin. At such times, she is as Louis describes her - "sister of the spotted, bright, fiery leopard" (636).

Yet, none of these battles leave her unaffected. For her need for people is real enough - "I am a social personage, who cannot live alone." (267), she tells Caroline. We find her weeping after her friction with her uncle, and especially after her encounter with Robert Moore, for she feels outraged and "shocked" (620) by his act of proposing to her. The tears and the intensity of the feeling probably come, not because he has sunk in her esteem, but by the feeling of contempt aroused by her own actions being misinterpreted, as she confesses to Moore: "... to mislead a sagacious man so far, I must have done wrong." (550). What counts principally for the "narcissistic" character is having the world's good opinion, and they are as vulnerable as the "self-effacing" type in this regard. This also accounts for Shirley's inability to admonish her housekeeper, Mrs. Gill for cheating her time and

again – what Shirley tries to explain as "moral cowardice" (270) is probably her need to retain her image of a tolerant, large-hearted being, who cares little about money. We know that submerged "self-effacing" trends always exist in all characters of the "expansive" type. In another of her works, *The Neurotic Personality of our Time*, Horney tells us that the sensitivity to humiliation and a fear of retaliation often, inhibit such persons and create "a need to avoid anything which might seem humiliating to others." (Horney 179) Shirley, certainly, gives this as one of the reasons for her failure to question Mrs. Gill - "I was afraid of seeing Mrs. Gill brought to shame and confusion of face." (270). Shirley is aware of her lack of mental toughness, despite her attitude of defiance and ability to stand up to anyone. There is never any doubt about her physical courage, as she tells Caroline – "I am fearless physically... You have twice, ten times my strength of mind on certain subjects, Caroline..." (270).

We find proof of this in Shirley's irrational behaviour after being bitten by the dog, Phoebe, which she is informed (probably misinformed) is a mad dog. Although outwardly calm, she is terror-struck at the idea of contracting hydrophobia and dying. But true to her "expansive" drives, she is even more terror-struck at the idea of appearing helpless and mortal like others. As Horney explains, "The reverse side of the necessity for mastery is his dread of anything connoting helplessness: this is the most poignant dread he has." (192). Even in this 'crisis', keeping up the image of strength and stoicism becomes all-important for Shirley. She would sink in her own esteem if she failed to live up to her image of omnipotence. She admonishes herself for her weakness by epithets like "Fool!", "Coward!" "Poltroon!" (508) and asks herself: "how dare you share your weakness and betray imbecile anxieties?" and advises herself to "shake them off: rise above them: if you cannot do this, hide them." (508). Shirley finds it impossible to be on totally intimate terms with anyone. Shirley never reveals her deepest yearnings even to Caroline. But this forced stoicism and silent suffering because of her false pride, take a heavy toll of both mind and physique, with the effects on the latter being apparent to all. The normally radiant and healthy Shirley begins to look thin and wan. As she later confesses to Louis Moore: "I believe, Mr. Moore, griefs and fears nursed in silence grow like Titan infants." (525). And it is

only when she manages to break her silence and confide in Louis that sanity is restored, and bodily health too returns, precisely as Louis had prophesied: "I believe confession in your case, would be half equivalent to cure." (518).

One finds several ambivalences in Shirley's personality. While her idealized image makes her project the impression of being capable of the self-surrender that all love demands, but her "expansive" drives make this impossible. Talking of the type of partner she desires, she states: "... the higher above me, so much the better: it degrades to stoop - it is glorious to look up." (222) And she rationalises for her inability to manage such adulation in real life by saying: "What frets me is that when I try to esteem, I am baffled: when religiously inclined, there are but false gods to adore. I disdain to be a Pagan..." (222), thus leaving her position and her idealized image intact. Her views on love and marriage reveal a similar conflict- "... I should not like to find out that what I loved did not love me..." (218). With regard to marriage, her feeling is: "I could never be my own mistress more. A terrible thought! it suffocates me! Now when I feel my company superfluous, I can comfortably fold my independence round me like a mantle, and drop my pride like a veil, and withdraw to solitude. If married, that could not be." (219). Shirley makes a realistic appraisal of herself when she tells her uncle: "... any man who wishes to live in decent comfort with me as a husband must be able to control me." (565) and yet, asserts in the same breath: "A tyrant would not hold me for a day - not for an hour. I would rebel - break from him - defy him." (565). When her uncle expresses his bewilderment at what appears to him a "self-contradiction" (565), Shirley gives a more exhaustive explanation: "Did I not say I prefer a master? One in whose presence I shall feel obliged and disposed to be good. One whose control my impatient temper must acknowledge. A man whose approbation can reward - whose displeasure punish me. A man I shall feel it impossible not to love, and very possible to fear." (565). Evidently, like all of Brontë's heroines, Shirley's taste is for the strong, talented hero who can rule and take care of the heroine without being a threat to her independence and individuality. Horney explains this streak fully in her book, *The Neurotic Personality of our Time*: "Neurotic girls cannot love a "weak" man because of their contempt for any weakness; but neither can they cope with a "strong"

man because they expect their partner always to give in. Hence, what they secretly look for is the hero, the superstrong man, who at the same time is so weak that he will bend to all their wishes without hesitance." (Horney 170).

Given the neurotic tendencies in both Shirley and Louis, one wonders if perfect happiness was ever attained by the married couple. Thus, we feel highly sceptical about R.B. Martin's statement that "Louis and Shirley come closer to Miss Brontë's ideal of the union of lovers who are almost identical in their outlooks". (139) Robert Moore, too, believes that "they were cut out for each other. Louis, strange to say, likes her all the better for these freaks: he will manage her, if any one can." (658); These freaks, possibly, gave the necessary sting to keep Louis's interest alive. And an unobtrusive partner would, certainly, be the best type of partner for the "resigned" type to which Louis Moore belongs. Shirley's passivity gives Louis a chance to make all the decisions and virtually, become the "master of Fieldhead" (657) allowing him to retain his sense of completeness and individuality. If the marriage survived and attained a fair amount of success, it could only be because of their mutual respect for each other, and mutual preference for freedom that would have prevented them from encroaching upon each other's individuality. What we have here is passive compromise, not merger.

It is, therefore, difficult to agree with Linder who views the marriage of Shirley and Louis as a perfect example of "romantic" love as opposed to the "prosaic" love of Robert and Caroline (194). Martin's description of the Robert-Caroline relationship as "the mating of totally different persons who will presumably remain unlike forever." (139) seems to be more relevant for the Shirley-Louis relationship. While they cannot be considered "unlike", it is their very similarities that constitute a major stumbling-block in the fruition of their relationship. "Prosaic" they may be, and yet, Robert and Caroline, by virtue of their mutual growth may have found a better sense of fulfilment. But we, certainly, cannot envisage here the dream-ending of *Jane Eyre*. Thus, although we have a happy ending to the novel, Charlotte Brontë seems to have accepted a fact voiced by Mrs. Pryor in the novel: "Two people can never, literally be as one." (389)

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