

## ABSTRACT

### CHARLOTTE BRONTË: REWRITING THE FEMALE CHARACTER

My study will probe *Jane Eyre*, *Shirley*, and *Villette*, to discover Charlotte Brontë's perception of real women—their desires, needs, restrictions, and resistance to those restrictions placed upon them—and, thus, to get a clearer awareness of the genuine Victorian female. Brontë deliberately rejected the artificial and damaging misrepresentations of the female in many male-authored texts—as the *angelic ideal* or “*temptresses, terrors, or monsters*”—and rewrote females in her own novels as complex characters, publishing under a masculine pseudonym in the hope that they would be accepted by the reader as valid interpretations of the authentic woman. Brontë awakens the female character to a realistic existence wherein she exhibits power, speaks with new-founded authority, and is finally heard. She reveals that male-designed-deprivations—inferior education, inferior job and professional opportunities, and inferior protection under the law—gave the appearance of an intrinsic “inferiority” in the female where none existed.

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December 2003