

**OP Ed Essay on the Author Charlotte Bronte**

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I have an in-depth study of Charlotte Bronte in one of my books on women writers and artists. Charlotte Bronte was a marvelous woman, and because she was already five when her mother died of Cancer she had quite a different creative process than her sister Emily Bronte, who was traumatized by the loss of their mother at the age of 3 (and 2 when her mother first became ill). Charlotte Bronte emerged most psychologically astute in her writing in her last novel "Villette" although she is known so universally for her most popular novel "Jane Eyre." I have a full chapter on Villette in "The Compulsion to Create:

A Psychoanalytic Study of Women Artists" (Routledge 1993), later called "The Compulsion to Create: Women Writers and Their Demon Lovers" (ORI Academic Press, 2013). Villette was truly a character driven novel, while "Jane Eyre" was more of a plot driven novel, although it had marvelous characters (but determinants of Fate, fortune, miracle). Charlotte Bronte was actually able to mourn within her last novel, "Villette," not only for her mother, but for her oedipal father disappointment, and the overall grief came when her siblings had died from Tuberculosis, and her brother Branwell from alcohol and drug addiction. She was able to live in the mourning process in her work, given enough internalization of her mother, which her sister didn't have. Her sister kept repeating the devastating early trauma in her work (e.g. "Wuthering Heights," as well as her poetry). Charlotte, unlike Emily, with her ability to grieve and mourn in a full developmental process, brought out a strong feminine voice, although she didn't approve of the 19<sup>th</sup> century politically activist feminists she saw. Perhaps unconsciously she did understand feminism. She certainly fought to have her own individual female voice. In an article in the *American Journal of Psychoanalysis* (1990), I wrote about Charlotte Bronte and the manifestation of the true feminine self, which also relates to the chapters I have about Charlotte Bronte within "The Compulsion to Create." I presented this paper on a panel with Esther Menaker, who gave it a very warm reception. Charlotte's voice emerged most resonant through her capacity to grieve, and to maintain the full dimensions of her mourning process.

This mourning process became Charlotte's voice, and her most vivid creative process in Villette, after the already brilliant "Jane Eyre." Her view of men was transformed with the full emergence of her voice, and simultaneously of her feminine self. She was able to surrender to marrying a man who admired and truly loved her, after that novel. Unfortunately, due to the toxic air in the burial ground behind her father's church, she also succumbed to Tuberculosis following one year of marriage. She had by then written great novels, and "Villette," her truly greatest novel, in rich psychological terms of ambivalence and complexity of character, and in character development that then wrote its own story. She showed in this later novel that a woman could be in love with 2 men, which her male published objected to. She also showed that a chauvinistic man could be transformed when he comes to love and be loved by a woman. Her female character too grew through the discovery that there could be mutuality with a man.