

INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

UMI

A Bell & Howell Information Company
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
313/761-4700 800/521-0600

ACTION IN CHARLOTTE BRONTE'S FICTION

by

GAIL GREEN

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

1995

UMI Number: 9530875

**Copyright 1995 by
Green, Gail
All rights reserved.**

**UMI Microform 9530875
Copyright 1995, by UMI Company. All rights reserved.
This microform edition is protected against unauthorized
copying under Title 17, United States Code.**

UMI

**300 North Zeeb Road
Ann Arbor, MI 48103**

© 1995

Gail Green

All Rights Reserved

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in English in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

4/4/95
Date

Felicia Bonaparte
Chair of Examining Committee

4 April 1995
Date

Joy A. White
Executive Officer

Felicia Bonaparte

Rachel M. Brownstein

Michael Timko

Supervisory Committee

The City University of New York

Abstract

ACTION IN CHARLOTTE BRONTE'S FICTION

by

Gail Green

Adviser: Professor Felicia Bonaparte

In literature, the linking of activity with maleness and passivity with femaleness is a prominent structural element. In her fiction, Charlotte Bronte in large part subscribes to the dictates of a narrative structure in which men "do" and women "be." However, there is a pronounced ambivalence in Bronte's portrayal of male activity. Charlotte Bronte, on one hand, suggests that male activity is aligned with progress and that there is something unstoppable in progress. Yet, she defies inevitability. She creates characters who respond to events as if they, the characters, have some control over the course of their lives.

Bronte's most fundamental step in departing from the narrative structure in which men "do" and women "be" is her placement of females at the center of three of her four novels. Thus she raises a question which her characters frequently ask themselves and each other: What should I do? It is a question that points to a crisis in the narrative. Unless something is done, the narrative cannot go forward. And in the very asking of that question by a woman, the quite radical possibility is raised that a woman character is responsible to make the narrative move.

The first chapter of the dissertation identifies elements in Bronte's fiction that point to a crisis in the narrative. The second chapter concerns the relationship between Bronte's portrayal of providence and desire. The third chapter focuses on change as related to action in Bronte's fiction. The fourth chapter presents vision as a form of action in her four novels. The fifth chapter is an examination of one novel--Villette--in relation to the ideas discussed in the previous chapters.

Acknowledgments

I was generously supported in the writing of this dissertation by The American Association of University Women and the City University of New York. The American Association of University Women provided an American dissertation fellowship which allowed me to accept a sabbatical from LaGuardia Community College of the City University of New York. During that sabbatical I was able to complete much of this dissertation. I was further supported in my work by the Faculty Advancement Program of the City University of New York.

My dissertation director, Felicia Bonaparte, of City College and The Graduate School and University Center of the City University of New York, read numerous drafts of this dissertation and spent many hours in conversation with me. She showed me the value in my own ideas and made me think of myself as a writer. I hope, as a teacher, that I might benefit from the model she provided.

My colleagues at LaGuardia Community College provided examples of ways to "do" in the world by teaching and writing. I have been graced by their support. They include: Leonard Vogt, Phyllis van Slyk, Marian Arkin, Pat Brown, Lenore Beaky, Cecilia Macheski, Joan Greenbaum, Gerald Johnson and Roberta Matthews. Daniel Lynch and

Sandra Hanson were chairs of the English department at LaGuardia during the time I was both a teacher and a student. The completion of my degree would not have been possible without their understanding and encouragement.

Through the Faculty Advancement Program of the City University of New York I had the opportunity to benefit from a dissertation writer's group. Altagracia Ortiz, the mentor of this group, pointed me toward the completion of my degree. It was my good fortune to meet, in this group, Alice Miller, who pushed me on when I thought I could not push myself. Other writers shared their work and generously critiqued mine. They include: Patricia Mann, Angela Weisl, Paula Nesoff, Joan Arnold, Caroline Mancuso and Tom Simpson.

Over the years, many women have encouraged me and made a place for thoughts and ideas in our lives. I am grateful to Michele Ochsner, Anne Slonim Rafal, Joy Getzenberg, Carole Hirsch, Ellen Lippmann, Laurie Harris and Anita Haravon. Terry Weill, in the ways she listened and heard, helped me to change my most deeply held beliefs about action.

Members of my family have expressed faith in my ability to complete this work and have provided meals, conversation and a place to stay when faith was not enough. They include: Jeffrey Green, Patty Green, Jason Green, Carole Teller, Vivian Schachter, Melvin Schachter, Saul Schachter, Louise Schachter, Marjorie Schachter and Richard Geismar. I am

grateful to my parents Bernice and Gerald Green for their belief in me and for their pride in my accomplishments. That belief and pride have been sustaining forces in my life.

Endings of dissertations can be both difficult and joyful moments. Neal Linden has helped me to find the joy in this moment and many others. My celebration of this occasion is all the more pleasurable because he joins me in it.

Table of Contents

Chapter I:	Action in Charlotte Bronte's Fiction An Introduction	1
Chapter II:	Providence, Desire and Action	29
Chapter III:	Action and Change	61
Chapter IV:	Action and Vision	92
Chapter V:	Human Action in <u>Villette</u>	117
Bibliography	152

Chapter I: Action in Charlotte Bronte's Fiction
An Introduction

In literature, the linking of activity with maleness and passivity with femaleness is a prominent structural element. This is an idea which Vladimir Propp articulates in The Morphology of the Folktale. Propp discusses the folktale in terms of seven spheres of action. The integrity of the tale depends on the characters acting in relation to each other. Propp identifies the fourth sphere of action as "[T]he sphere of action of a princess (a sought-for person) and of her father" (79). The princess functions in the tale as one whose existence gives meaning to the actions--such as fights, searches, rescues, pursuits--of prominent male characters. The princess engages in none of these actions. She waits. Sometimes she assigns difficult tasks by which the hero might prove himself. Ultimately, she is married. The princess in Propp's scheme is assigned a sphere of action, yet she appears to do very little. She appears to be in the narrative so that the men might do. In The Life of Charlotte Bronte, Elizabeth Gaskell, writing of Branwell Bronte, invokes the idea that doing is male and that being is female: "There are always peculiar trials in the life of an only boy in a family of girls. He is expected to act a

part in life; to do, while they are only to be..." (197; ch. 9).¹

In her fiction, Charlotte Bronte in large part subscribes to the dictates of a narrative structure in which men "do" and women "be." Many of the male characters in her fiction are, to use a phrase Bronte uses in describing Robert Moore in Shirley, "possessed of the quality of activity" (61; ch. 2). They pursue what they want--In The Professor William Crimsworth hunts for Frances Henri after Mdlle. Reuter sends her away, finds Frances and marries her. They physically move more than the women do--In Jane Eyre Rochester first appears to us galloping down a road on a horse. They are technologically innovative--in Shirley Robert Moore is a mill owner who introduces shearing frames into his mill. They fix things--In Villette Dr John is a surgeon.

However, there is a pronounced ambivalence in Bronte's portrayal of male activity. Rochester falls off his horse; Robert Moore cares little for the people who work in his mill; and Dr John, whom Bronte describes with some sharpness as "a man of action than of thought," (341; ch. 23) does not

¹ I am indebted to Felicia Bonaparte for directing my attention to this significant passage and for adding to my understanding of it. Bonaparte discusses this passage in The Gypsy Bachelor of Manchester. Irene Tayler refers to this passage in Holy Ghosts: The Male Muses of Emily and Charlotte Bronte. Tayler emphasizes that both sisters associated being with their dead mother and doing with their father (7).

sustain the adoration of Lucy Snowe, the novel's main character.

Shirley, Charlotte Bronte's third novel, most vividly expresses this ambivalence. Shirley is about many things. It is about two women, their relations to men and their relations to each other. It is about dramatic changes in the Yorkshire woolen industry. Describing the effects of the Orders of Council and the introduction of machinery into the Yorkshire woolen mills on the lives of manufacturers and mill workers, Bronte writes:

The throes of a sort of moral earthquake were felt heaving under the hills of the northern countries. But, as is usual in such cases, nobody took much notice. When a food-riot broke out in a manufacturing town, when a gig-mill was burnt to the ground, or a manufacturer's house was attacked, the furniture thrown out into the streets, and the family forced to flee for their lives, some local measures were or were not taken by the local magistracy; a ringleader was detected or more frequently suffered to elude detection; newspaper paragraphs were written on the subject, and there the thing stopped. As to the sufferers, whose sole inheritance was labour, and who had lost that inheritance--who could not get work, and consequently could not get wages, and consequently could not get bread--they were left to suffer on; perhaps inevitably

left: it would not do to stop the progress of invention, to damage science by discouraging its improvements; the war could not be terminated, efficient relief could not be raised: there was no help then; so the unemployed underwent their destiny--ate the bread and drank the waters of affliction (62; ch. 2)

Bronte writes about real events here. In particular she writes about a food-riot, the burning of a mill, the attack on a manufacturer and the hunger of unemployed workers. She draws our attention to this reality, because there is something else which would have us turn away from it and cause us to look instead at "progress"--progress based on technology, science and war. This is the progress which Robert Moore embraces. "Moore ever wanted to push on," Bronte tells us. "'Forward' was the device stamped upon his soul" (61; ch. 2).

Charlotte Bronte, on one hand, suggests that male activity is aligned with progress and that there is something unstoppable in progress. She suggests that progress is destined. "The sufferers," she reminds us, "were left to suffer on; perhaps inevitably left" (62; ch. 2). Yet, she defies inevitability. In her fiction, there is a sense of urgency in having characters "do" in a way that will make change happen. She creates characters who respond to events as if they, the characters, might affect

the course of events, as if they have some control over the course of their lives. Such thinking flies in the face of the idea that human beings are figures in a sequence of events that are destined to occur. We think of Dickens' Scrooge speaking these words to the last of the spirits: "'Men's courses will foreshadow certain ends, to which, if persevered in, they must lead.... But if the courses be departed from, the ends will change. Say it is thus with what you show me!'" (Stave 4: 150) In her novels, Bronte departs from certain courses. Like many of her contemporaries, she worked within the confines of narrative tradition and against it, maintaining that tradition and violating it.² Her maintenance and violation of that tradition are powerful forces in her work which result in a complex portrayal of human action.

Bronte's most fundamental, most strategic step in making a departure is her placement of females at the center of three of her four novels. Such placement places a burden on the woman character and on the novel. We wonder how women, so long portrayed as inactive, can support that burden. "Could there be a slenderer, more insignificant thread in human history," George Eliot writes of Gwendolen

² In "When We Dead Awaken," Adrienne Rich describes a process of "re-vision," of seeing old texts in new ways. In The Madwoman in the Attic, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar describe the ways nineteenth century women writers revise male genres. Both works are essential to understanding how Charlotte Bronte both worked within the tradition of the novel and against it.

Harleth in Daniel Deronda, "than this consciousness of a girl, busy with her small inferences of the way in which she could make her life pleasant?" Eliot continues:

[I]n a time, too, when ideas were with fresh vigour making armies of themselves, and the universal kinship was declaring itself fiercely: when women on the other side of the world would not mourn for the husbands and sons who died bravely in a common cause, and men stinted of bread on our side of the world heard of that willing loss and were patient: a time when the soul of man was waking to pulses which had for centuries been beating in him unheard, until their full sum made a new life of terror and joy.

What in the midst of that mighty drama are girls and their blind visions? They are the Yea or Nay of that good for which men are enduring and fighting. In these delicate vessels is borne onward through the ages the treasure of human affections. (159-160; book II; ch. 11)

On one hand, girls and women are insignificant in human history. On the other hand, they are the reason men fight wars. Nina Auerbach writes, "In nineteenth-century novels and in Victorian life as well, women were supposed to embody an integrity of being that offered ballast to the excruciating complexities of men and the painful falsifications of the society they made" ("Alluring

Vacancies" 36). What happens when this moral center is placed at the center of a novel, a place that requires doing?

What happens at first glance is not as shocking as one would think. Bronte does not grant her women characters the same "quality of activity" that she grants men. Her women characters do not act in the way men do. Bronte, as novelist bound in good part to the structures Propp describes, must deny women certain forms of action if she is to participate in the tradition of the novel. Yet she protests the tradition in which she participates. From the leads at Thornfield, Jane Eyre tells us,

It is in vain to say human beings ought to be satisfied with tranquility: they must have action; and they will make it if they cannot find it. Millions are condemned to a stiller doom than mine, and millions are in silent revolt against their lot. Nobody knows how many rebellions ferment in the masses of life which people earth. Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting

stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. It is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex. (141; ch. 12)

The speech points to a challenge that Charlotte Bronte takes on, a challenge to make the novel responsive to changes in the world, to free the novel from enslavement to the idea of destiny. The speech suggests a call to battle. Adrienne Rich refers to it as "Charlotte Bronte's feminist manifesto."³ Yet it is not delivered to an angry mob or an army straining at the yoke. It is not even spoken. At whom is the speech directed? If there is doing to be done, who is to do it? Jane's speech from the leads is complemented by a question that characters in Bronte's fiction frequently ask: "'What am I to do?'" Jane Eyre poses this question to herself after her marriage to Rochester is interrupted by the announcement of Bertha's existence (325; ch. 27). When Jane then tells Rochester that she will be leaving him, he asks her, "'What shall I do, Jane?'" (343; ch. 27) Caroline Helstone, after she is rebuffed by Robert Moore, ruminates:

'I have to live, perhaps, till seventy years. As far as I know, I have good health: half a century of

³ In "Jane Eyre: The Temptations of a Motherless Woman" Rich writes, "Written one hundred and twenty-six years ago, it is still having to be written over and over today, in different language but with essentially the same sense that sentiments of this kind are still unacceptable to many, and that in uttering them one lays oneself open to blame and to entrenched resistance." (On Lies Secrets and Silence 98)

existence may lie before me. How am I to occupy it?
 What am I to do to fill the interval of time which
 spreads between me and the grave?' (190; ch. 10)

Lucy Snowe asks herself during the vacation which precedes her visit to the confessional, "[W]hat shall I do? How shall I keep well?" (231; ch. 15) Whenever a main character in Bronte's fiction is threatened to the point that his/her future in the narrative is uncertain, the question is raised.

"What should I do?" reverberates throughout the novels. It is a question that points to a crisis in the narrative. Unless something is done, the narrative cannot go forward. And in the very asking of that question by a woman the quite radical possibility is raised that a woman character is responsible to make the narrative move.

It is important to note that in two of the three novels the question is asked when a particular possibility has been withdrawn. Jane asks the question after her marriage to Rochester is interrupted by the revelation of Bertha's existence. Caroline Helstone asks the question when she believes that she will never marry Robert Moore. Lucy Snowe asks the question during the long vacation she spends at Madame Beck's school. For Lucy, there has not even been the prospect of marriage. When there is no possibility of a marriage for a woman character, there is no particular ending towards which she might move and no ultimate proof

that she is the goodness on behalf of which men act. This is a crisis.

Carolyn Heilbrun reminds us: "Safety and closure, which have always been held out to women as the ideals of female destiny, are not places of adventure, or experience, or life" (Writing 20). When marriage, that place of safety and closure is taken away, and Bronte seems to take it away at least temporarily, it is not clear what, if anything, opens up for Bronte's characters. Rather, there are in each novel, moments in which characters ponder that place of safety and closure from outside of it, sometimes wishing to locate themselves within it, sometimes being repelled by it and, most powerfully, choosing to forsake it.

Places of safety and closure are most prominently represented as encased still images.⁴ William Crimsworth's mother is the first of those images. William examines the portrait early in the novel:

I looked for and found my mother's picture. I took a wax-taper from a stand, and held it up. I gazed long, earnestly; my heart grew to the image. My mother, I perceived, had bequeathed to me much of her features and countenance--her forehead, her eyes, her complexion. (18; ch. 3)

⁴ Gilbert and Gubar write powerfully about images of enclosure and encasement in The Madwoman in the Attic.

Later in The Professor, Yorke Hunsden sends William the portrait in the spirit of a taunt. He accompanies the gift with a note that begins, "There is a sort of stupid pleasure in giving a child sweets, a fool his bells, a dog a bone. You are repaid by...watching the dog's nature come out over his bone" (186; ch. 22).

This portrait is the first in a series of paintings of the dead that will appear in Bronte's novels. These paintings taunt the viewer, suggesting both attraction and repulsion. Ultimately they suggest death.⁵ William is, by virtue of his gender, somewhat safe from the lure of the portrait. He can want his mother, but he is free not to become her. He can resist the imprisonment of the frame. Bronte's women characters are far more threatened. The encased image is for her women characters both mother and self. The woman who looks at the framed image is both in the frame and outside of it. Bronte's women characters cannot simply long for the mother as does William. They must long and actively resist that longing. They must choose between life and death.

We see this choice powerfully expressed in Bronte's fiction when Jane Eyre is forced to occupy the red room. In the red room Jane longs for the dead:

⁵ In Charlotte Bronte's World of Death, Robert Keefe writes, "Both Bronte's art and life can be seen as struggles against her will to die" (xvi).

I began to recall what I had heard of dead men, troubled in their graves by the violation of their last wishes, revisiting the earth to punish the perjured and avenge the oppressed; and I thought of Mr. Reed's spirit, harassed by the wrongs of his sister's child, might quit its abode--whether in the church vault or the unknown world of the departed--and rise before me in this chamber. (48; ch. 2)

Jane is initially comforted. However, there are implications to this idea. "This idea, consolatory in theory, I felt would be terrible if realized: with all my might endeavoured to stifle it--I endeavoured to be firm" (48; ch. 2).

Endeavouring to stifle it, endeavouring to be firm, leads Jane to see a light. Jane at this moment turns towards death: "I thought the swift-darting beam was a herald of some coming vision from another world" (49; ch. 2). Jane passes out; she retreats from death and in waking turns toward life.

Bronte's characters frequently experience what Jane Eyre experiences, that is the pull towards death and the movement away from that pull towards life. In the novels, the pull towards death is often expressed as passivity, the type of passivity that renders Jane Eyre a prisoner of the window-seat in the Reed household, the passivity that makes Caroline Helstone sick almost unto death, and the passivity

that renders Lucy Snowe "a bark slumbering through halcyon weather, in a harbour still as glass..." (94; ch. 4). This is the same passivity that Lucy Snowe associates with two paintings she studies in a gallery. One is a portrait of Cleopatra and the other is a set of four images: "La vie d'une femme." Cleopatra is massive and slovenly. However, she is not so radically different from the tidy, exemplary figures in "La vie d'une femme." They are all dead. Lucy tells us: "All these four 'Anges' were grim and gray as burglars, and cold and vapid as ghosts. What women to live with! insincere, ill-humoured, bloodless, brainless nonentities! As bad in their way as the indolent gipsy-giantess, the Cleopatra, in hers" (278; ch. 19).

These images represent what D. A. Miller refers to as the nonnarratable. "The nonnarratable is not the unspeakable," writes Miller. "What defines a nonnarratable element is its incapacity to generate a story. Properly or intrinsically it has no narrative future..." (Narrative and Its Discontents 5). Women characters must be freed from the frame in order to do, to live and to generate stories. All of this is accompanied by a sense of urgency. One wonders then, why the choice is as difficult as it is, why choosing makes Jane pass out in the red room, why there are such contradictory pulls in the novel. Ultimately, one wonders, why it is that the spheres of action are intransigent as they are.

In Mimesis, Eric Auerbach discusses the intransigence of action, in particular male action, in courtly romance.⁶ He directs our attention to the remarkable endurance of knightly adventuring as a form of activity. Auerbach points out that the knights of Yvain behave in a way that "serves no practical reality" (134). In comparing Yvain to the earlier chanson de geste, Auerbach explains,

Calogrenant sets out without mission or office; he seeks adventure, that is, perilous encounters by which he can prove his mettle. There is nothing like this in the chanson de geste. There a knight who sets off has an office and a place in a politico-historical context. It is doubtless simplified and distorted in the manner of legend, but it is maintained insofar as the characters who take part in the action have a function in the ideal world--for instance, the defense of Charles's realm against the infidels, their conquest and conversion, and so forth....Calogrenant, on the other hand, has no political or historical task, nor has any other knight of Arthur's court. (133-134)

The knights of courtly romance go on adventures to prove themselves worthy of the adventures in which they engage (Auerbach 136). The narrative is completely closed, sustaining itself by an unquestioning stance towards the

⁶ I am grateful to Angela Weisl for her insights concerning action in medieval literature.

virtue of the activity of the main characters. The activity thus becomes "right." Auerbach explains:

Calogrenant tells King Arthur's Round Table that, seven years earlier, he had ridden away alone in quest of adventure, armed as befits a knight, and he had come upon a road leading to the right, straight through a dense forest. Here we stop and wonder. To the right? That is a strange indication of locality when, as in this case, it is used absolutely. In terms of terrestrial topography it makes sense only when used relatively. Hence it must here have an ethical significance. Apparently it is the "right way" which Calogrenant discovered. (129)

The ethos of the tale, as Auerbach emphasizes, becomes "absolute." Avanture is good. The maintenance of this stance requires that goodness and activity be unquestionably connected. And maintaining that stance requires maintaining that narrative and reality are separate.

Women are essential to these courtly romances not simply in that they function as a reward, but for the way in which they contribute to the process by which going right always means that one is going the right way. If, as Nina Auerbach has stated, women in Victorian fiction and life are ballast poised against falsification and complexity, women function in courtly romance and in Victorian fiction and life, as that which maintains a

distance between narrative and historical reality, as that which would have us think one can act in a certain way and have it be good, because it is unquestionably good. What is important here is that women are segregated in a different sphere in which they be rather than do, so that goodness is guarded from change.

When women characters in Charlotte Bronte's fiction ask what they should do, they raise a question about the future of the narrative, a question that profoundly concerns the novel's relationship to morality. If women "do" they contaminate goodness; they bring themselves into contact with complexity. They enter an arena in which going the right way only makes sense if right is presented as relative to other elements in a particular terrain. Yet, Bronte further complicates the issue. She suggests that if women don't do and only be, they show cowardice, a cowardice that Charlotte Bronte suggests is inconsistent with goodness. In Villette, Lucy Snowe explains: "I had wanted to compromise with Fate: to escape occasional great agonies by submitting to a whole life of privation and small pains. Fate would not be pacified; nor would Providence sanction this shrinking sloth and cowardly indolence" (97; ch. 4).

Charlotte Bronte was a deeply moral person. And she was tormented by the difficulty in knowing absolutely what constituted the right way. Yet, it appears, based on the course her writing takes and based on what she herself had

to say about her writing, that she felt the imperative to do in different ways, even if that doing meant taking certain risks. Bronte took one of her biggest risks when she announced the relinquishment of a way of thinking that sustained her childhood writing. She announced that she would no longer write about Angria, a kingdom in which men do and women be. In her essay "Farewell to Angria," Bronte announced a departure:

Yet do not urge me too fast, reader: it is not easy to dismiss from my imagination the images which have filled it so long; they were my friends and my intimate acquaintances, and I could with little labour describe to you the faces, the voices, the actions, of those who peopled my thoughts by day, and not seldom stole strangely even into my dreams by night. When I [? try] to conjure up new inmates, I feel as if I had got into a distant country where every face was unknown, and the character of all the population an enigma which it would take much study to comprehend and much talent to expound. (438)

The "Farewell" is an important moment in Bronte's writing career. The "Farewell" is also not final. Again and again in her fiction she would place characters on thresholds attempting to leave behind the heroic. She makes the gesture, for instance, when in Shirley she introduces us to Caroline Helstone on the eve of Caroline's entrance into

adulthood: "Caroline Helstone was just eighteen years old; and at eighteen the true narrative of life is yet to be commenced.... Before that time our world is heroic; its inhabitants half-divine or semi-demon..." (121; ch. 7). The loss of heroism is a theme that appears at another level in Shirley. Bronte mourns the loss of a heroic world by building a novel in an historical period which marks its demise. The last page of Shirley includes a testimony to the end of one world and the beginning of another. In Fieldhollow, where Caroline Helstone's housekeeper reports that her mother had seen a fairy, Caroline describes the "manufacturer's day-dreams embodied in substantial stone and brick and ashes--the cinder block highway, the cottages and the cottage gardens; there I saw a mighty mill, and a chimney ambitious as the tower of Babel" (599; ch. 37).

Bronte's novels often occupy the cusp of two worlds--a world of childhood and a world of adulthood; a world in which fairies have been sighted and a world in which mills are being built; and a world of the heroic and a world of the "real."⁷ And women characters often speak about their roles in relation to this location. Their confusion is pronounced. When Caroline considers that she may never

⁷ Winifred Gerin writes that Bronte's early life provided her with the "opportunity to evolve simultaneously upon two planes: a child still, believing in fairies and the eastern genii, yet grasping the significance of contemporary politics and taking an adult's interest in the world about her" (30).

marry, she asks not only "What am I to do?" but other large questions: "'What was I created for, I wonder? Where is my place in the world?'" (190; ch. 10) Caroline then gives a soliloquy that is perhaps more radical than Jane's "feminist manifesto" from the leads.

'Ah! I see,' she pursued presently; 'that is the question which most old maids are puzzled to solve: other people solve it for them by saying, 'Your place is to do good to others, to be helpful whenever help is wanted.' That is right in some measure, and a very convenient doctrine for the people who hold it; but I perceive that certain sets of human beings are very apt to maintain that other sets should give up their lives to them and their service, and then they requite them by praise: they call them devoted and virtuous. Is it enough? Is it to live? Is there not a terrible hollowness, mockery, want, craving, in that existence which is given away to others, for want of something of your own to bestow it on? I suspect there is. Does virtue lie in abnegation of self? I do not believe it. Undue humility makes tyranny; weak concession creates selfishness.' (190; ch. 10)

It is shocking to read Caroline announce, if only to herself, that she does not believe that virtue lies in abnegation of self. It is shocking because there is so much to suggest in fiction and in life that for women, virtue

does lie in abnegation of self. And a mere novel earlier, we hear Helen Burns, Bronte's most virtuous character, preach the idea that virtue does lie in abnegation of self. Helen tells Jane: "'Read the New Testament and observe what Christ says, and how He acts; make His word your rule, and His conduct your example.'" (90; ch. 6). When Jane asks Helen to tell her what Christ says, Helen says: "'Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you and despitefully use you'" (90; ch. 6).

Thus Charlotte Bronte raises a great question: What constitutes virtuous action? In particular, what constitutes virtuous action for women characters in novels? Aristotle, the earliest action theorist, presents goodness and action as inextricably linked: "Every act and every inquiry, and similarly every action and every pursuit, is thought to aim at some good; and for this reason the good has rightly been disclosed to be that at which all things aim" (1; book I). Aristotle consistently uses the word man and refers to man as a rational being who acts to bring about "happiness." "[I]t is for the sake of this," writes Aristotle, "that we all do everything else" (12; book I). Philosophers and social theorists were to build on this idea to emphasize that both men and women act not only to bring about their own happiness but the happiness of a group. Thus, many years after Aristotle, Alasdair MacIntyre writes:

The catalogue of the virtues will therefore include the virtues required to sustain the kind of households and the kind of political communities in which men and women can seek for the good together and the virtues necessary for philosophical enquiry about the character of the good. (219)

Charlotte Bronte enters a philosophical fray. It is not so clear, in her fiction, that self-abnegation, even if it is done in the interest of others, is good. Put another way, it is not clear that it is good for a woman to act within a certain sphere when what that sphere requires is her death in life. Charlotte Bronte has Helen die soon after speaking the words of Christ to Jane. Self-abnegation provides Helen with the ultimate reward; yet it takes Helen out of life and out of the novel. Bronte portrays Jane to be deeply drawn to Helen and also skeptical of what Helen preaches. And when Jane encounters a crisis, really the crisis in the novel--that is when the wedding ceremony is interrupted--Bronte has Jane invoke a morality of which Helen would approve. In the following passage, Jane invokes a morality that is based in absolutes:

Some time in the afternoon I raised my head, and looking round and seeing the western sun gilding the sign of its decline on the wall, I asked 'What am I to do?'

But the answer my mind gave--'Leave Thornfield at once'--was so prompt, so dread, that I stopped my ears. I said I could not bear such words now....

But, then a voice within me averred that I could do it, foretold that I should do it. I wrestled with my own resolution. I wanted to be weak that I might avoid the awful passage of further suffering I saw laid out for me; and Conscience, turned tyrant, held Passion by the throat, told her tauntingly, she had yet but dipped her dainty feet in the slough, and swore that with that arm of iron he would thrust her down to unsounded depths of agony.

'Let me be torn away then!' I cried. 'Let another help me!'

'No; you shall tear yourself away, none shall help you: you shall yourself pluck out your right eye; yourself cut off your right hand: your heart shall be the victim, and you the priest to transfix it.' (325; ch. 27)

What is important here is that there is a wholeness to this morality. It is a narrative unto itself. As Inga Stina-Ewbank points out, Bronte draws on personified abstracts to present a morality play: "Meaning--individual, emotionally comprehended meaning--is given here by the context of the plot and character to words like 'conscience' and 'passion'; and these concepts engage in a drama, a

morality play..." (185). The play thus serves to enclose the morality in its own terms. There is no room for questioning if what is good is actually good, if turning right is actually going the right way. "Conscience" and "passion" are presented as absolutes.

Ambivalence in regard to this morality is expressed later in the novel. Jane does not, for instance, invoke these abstracts when she considers whether or not to marry St. John Rivers. Rather, her thinking is quite different. "I felt veneration for St John--veneration so strong that its impetus thrust me at once to the point I had so long shunned" (443; ch. 35). But Jane chooses, rather profoundly, not to sacrifice herself, in particular, not to sacrifice her own will: "I was tempted to cease struggling with him--to rush down the torrent of his will into the gulf of his existence, and there lose my own" (443; ch. 35). Jane does not, as we know, marry St. John Rivers. But Jane does not entirely make the decision not to. She flees St. John Rivers because she hears her name being called. And as much as Jane then insists, "It was my time to assume ascendancy. My powers were in play and in force" (445; ch. 35), the newly ascendant Jane gets down on her knees: "I mounted to my chamber; locked myself in; fell on my knees; and prayed in my way--a different way to St John's, but effective in its own fashion" (445; ch. 35).

All of this forces the question: Who or what is the source of these decisions? Elizabeth Rigby in her 1847 review of Jane Eyre, "An Anti-Christian Composition," condemns Jane and her author with these words: "It is by her own talents, virtues, and courage that she is made to attain the summit of human happiness, and, as far as Jane Eyre's own statement is concerned, no one would think that she owed anything to God above or to man below" (451). Our late twentieth century reading gives us quite the opposite impression, that Jane behaves as if she owes God a great deal. The question as to who is in control is an important one. Aristotle emphasizes that "virtue is concerned with passions and actions, and on voluntary passions and actions praise and blame are bestowed..." (48: book III).⁸

In Shirley we see a woman character volunteer to act in a way that signals a development in Bronte's work. First, Shirley professes an intention to be good. But she talks about this goodness granting the concept relativity. She tells Caroline,

'Caroline, I wish to tell you that I have a great weight on my mind: my conscience is quite uneasy, as if I had committed, or was going to commit, a crime. It is not my private conscience, you must understand,

⁸ Aristotle goes on to explain, "The voluntary would seem to be that of which the moving principle is in the agent himself, he being aware of the particular circumstances of the action" (52).

but my landed-proprietor and lord-of-the-manor
conscience.' (266; ch. 14)

After establishing that she has different consciences that she invokes in different situations, Shirley then announces a decision to do what Caroline Helstone had done earlier in the novel: "I mean to enter on a series of good works. Don't be surprised, therefore, if you see me all at once turn outrageously charitable" (266; ch. 14).

This sort of goodness is quite different from the Helen Burns type of goodness we witness in Jane Eyre. Shirley announces a desire to help the hungry but also announces that if the hungry turn against her, she will fight them.

'If once the poor gather and rise in the form of a mob, I shall turn against them as an aristocrat: if they bully me, I must defy; if they attack, I must resist, - and I will.'

'You talk like Robert.'

'I feel like Robert, only more fierily' (268; ch. 14).

It is significant that Caroline notes that Shirley sounds like a man. In Shirley, a woman and a man share the same sphere---at least temporarily.⁹ This coincides with the fact that ideas about Christian goodness multiply in Bronte's work. There are different types of consciences it

⁹ Vladimir Propp notes that one character can be involved in several spheres of action.

appears. And what is good in one situation is not good in another. In a "real" world it appears that goodness involves action and also involves thinking of goodness as changeable. It can no longer be absolute. It is no surprise then that marriage, the event in the novel which more than signalling the union of two people signals that the events in the novel comprise a narrative which is whole and moral,¹⁰ loses its secure place. Although Shirley marries Louis Moore at the end of the novel, that marriage does not overshadow her more provocative role in the novel as one who is a manly woman, a woman who shares a great deal in particular with Robert Moore. Her identification with the interests and activity of men cannot be taken lightly. She, more than Robert, suggests the complexity of the situation Robert as a manufacturer faces, the difficulty in finding which way is right. She appears to signal the collapse of being and doing, the presence of both, in one individual's life.

To collapse being and doing is to introduce a consciousness which is at great odds with a narrative which depends on woman's passivity.¹¹ Bound as that passivity is

¹⁰ Alasdair MacIntyre writes about marriage in the work of Jane Austen: "[Austen] thus turns away from the competing catalogues of the virtues of the eighteenth century and restores a teleological perspective. Her heroines seek the good through seeking their own good in marriage" (240).

¹¹ In Bearing the Word Margaret Homans raises the important question as to why language and culture depend on the death or absence of the mother.

to ideas concerning morality and narrative unity, one might ask what that goodness, the absoluteness of it, defends us against. Perhaps our own goodness, the goodness of women must be frozen in an ethos, encased, voided of activity, so that women do not do what men possessed of activity traditionally do when they go on adventures: kill. In Women and the Demon, Nina Auerbach perceptively comments:

[W]hen we actually read Trilby, Dracula, or Studies on Hysteria, we are struck by the kinds of power that are granted to the women: the victim of paralysis possesses seemingly infinite capacities of regenerative being that turn on her triumphant mesmerizer and paralyze him in turn. (17)

In Victorian fiction, we see this fear realized. Women kill: Tess kills, Hetty kills, and perhaps in a way that most directly suggests the power that is perceived and feared in women, Gwendolen Harleth kills her husband by wishing him dead. Gwendolen confesses:

'And because I felt more helpless than ever, my thoughts went out over worse things--I longed for worse things--I had cruel wishes--I fancied impossible ways of--I did not want to die myself; I was afraid of our being drowned together. If it had been any use I should have prayed--I should have prayed that something might befall him. I should have prayed that he might sink out of my sight and leave me alone. I knew no way

of killing him there, but I did, I did kill him in my thoughts' (760; book VII; ch. 56).

Gwendolen's murder of Grandcourt shows the power she associates with her own thoughts and signals a great moral crisis, Gwendolen's and the novel's. Gwendolen's last words in Daniel Deronda are moving for their simple power: "'I shall live. I shall be better'" (879; book VIII; ch. 69).

Charlotte Bronte paves the way for George Eliot to write these words. Bronte's characters desire to live. And that is often problematic in her novels. Her women characters are not the modern heroes of which Carolyn Heilbrun writes: "The woman literature of modern literature is sustained by some sense of her own autonomy as she contemplates and searches for a destiny; she does not wait to be swept up by life as a girl is swept up by a waltz" (Towards a Recognition 92). Charlotte Bronte's characters are not sustained by a sense of their own autonomy. They are unmoored from worlds in which they have been the pawns in someone else's game. And they struggle to survive being unmoored. We see in them glimpses of the characters to follow, characters who will more fully live, who will more fully realize their own morality in their own actions. We see in them ourselves.

Chapter II: Providence, Desire and Action

It is apparent in The Professor, Jane Eyre, Shirley and Villette that Charlotte Bronte cannot easily represent women as acting as men do. What is not so apparent and what is far more difficult to understand is how Bronte does indeed create women characters within narrative structures which have traditionally confined women to roles in which they are the rewards offered to men. Her portrayal of active women relies on both the maintenance and violation of a narrative structure bound not only to the spheres of action that Propp describes but to a providential aesthetic.¹

"Providence," writes Barbara Hardy, "is not a dead word when used by Charlotte Bronte..." (62). Rather, Hardy insists, it is a vital ideology which gives form to her fiction. Writing not only of the work of Charlotte Bronte, but of the work of Daniel Defoe, Thomas Hardy, and E. M. Forster as well, Hardy explains:

¹ I draw on Thomas Vargish's use of the term "providential aesthetic" in The Providential Aesthetic in Victorian Fiction. Vargish writes, "Attention to what I will define as a providential aesthetic leads immediately to issues of causality in narrative...to the confines and opportunities of temporal modes...to the relation between typological or parabolic significance and the credibility of character and event..." (2).

In the case of dogmatic forms which concern me here, there is a simple and simplified belief which excludes much of the varied causality to be found in life, which is metaphysical in character and has precise moral consequences. In...Jane Eyre the action and characters are shaped by the dogmatism of a special belief, the belief in Providence. (53)

The providential aesthetic, as it is represented in the nineteenth century novel, often reveals a narrative of which God is the ultimate author and agent, yet within which humanity also acts. Within this narrative form, events that might seem unrelated are revealed to be related in a way that suggests God's ultimate power and beneficence. In Bleak House, for example, Esther Summerson, newly aware that she is the illegitimate daughter of Lady Dedlock, returns to her room where she reads two letters, one from Ada and one from her guardian. Suddenly, she sees her birth and the two letters as part of a larger story:

For, I saw very well that I could not have been intended to die as I should never have lived; not to say should never have been reserved for such a happy life. I saw very well how many things had worked together for my welfare. (chap. 36; 479)

The proof of Esther's statement comes at the ending of the novel. The marriage at the end of Bleak House, like

the marriages that end many novels, is proof that Esther operates within a series of events that are part of a plan. The marriage also proves that Esther has a particular role, that she occupies a sphere within those events. She serves as a reward. And the marriage is her reward for serving as a reward. Like the adventures of knights which prove the knights worthy of the adventures in which they engage, Esther's marriage proves her worthy of marriage. Thus narrative, role and action are tightly bound to each other.

Bronte's work to a large degree fits into this aesthetic. In her novels, destiny is a powerful force. Characters move from place to place giving us the impression that they are moving to a particular place where they are supposed to arrive--a destination. The presence of a convincing sense of closure or the absence of it is significant, indicating the capacity of a providential aesthetic to support each narrative. In Bronte's fiction, the endings signal the failure of that aesthetic. As Peter Alan Dale emphasizes,

In neither Jane Eyre nor Villette is Bronte conforming to the central expectation of the religious 'progress.' Christian salvation is clearly the assumed end of these narratives, but whether her pilgrims actually arrive there is another question, and insofar as it is, Bronte is

very much within her own century, confronting the problem we consider characteristic of it, the loss of religious perspective. (4)

The ending of each of Bronte's novels fails to provide a firm sense of closure. The ending of The Professor comes close to providing the 'assumed end' to which Dale refers, yet Frances's announcement following that marriage--"I don't work enough" (218; ch. XXV)--cracks the sphere which Frances occupies, making her appear less than princess-like and making the novel seem not entirely finished. The popularity of Jane Eyre rests largely on the drive towards a marriage, yet as Dale points out, "the romantic ending is not the ending proper. The religious structure of the narrative requires something beyond it, requires the final explicit reference to salvation" (13). This will be discussed later in this study. The double marriage that ends Shirley fails to make the novel cohere. And Bronte ends Villette quite radically, without a marriage.

The endings of her novels suggest the failure of an idea on which an entire world view depends. That idea is that there is one power that controls all human events. That power comes from God. A crisis emerges, a crisis that is prominent in the nineteenth century, in life and in writing. "Action," wrote Thomas Carlyle in 1831,

in those old days, was easy, was voluntary, for the divine worth of human things lay acknowledged; Speculation was wholesome, for it ranged itself as the handmaid of Action; what could not so range itself died out by its natural death, by neglect. Loyalty still hallowed obedience, and made rule noble; there was still something to be noble to: the God-like stood embodied under many a symbol in men's interests and business; the Finite shadowed forth the Infinite; Eternity looked through Time. The Life of man was encompassed and overcanopied by a glory of Heaven, even as his dwelling-place by the azure vault.

How changed in these new days! (29-30)

Bronte portrayed action in her fiction in a way that is fraught with the spiritual struggles of her age. While none of Bronte's characters go so far as to claim, as does Thomas Hardy's Tess, that humanity lives on a blighted star, there is in Bronte's fiction a sense of a world in which God's presence is sometimes doubted. And doubt is all the more powerful in her work because it is set against a backdrop of faith. When Jane Eyre listens to Helen Burns espousing doctrine, Jane is incredulous. Yet, she recognizes something behind the doctrine which she cannot turn away from. "Still I felt that Helen Burns considered things by a light invisible to my eyes.

I suspected she might be right and I wrong..."(88; ch. 6)
There is a powerful sense of longing for what appears to be lost, a longing that Jane expresses in her attachment to the dying Helen. This attachment is poignantly expressed when Jane falls asleep nestled in Helen's arms on the night Helen dies. What is lost is no less than a secure relationship to the world, a relationship in which a child nestles to his/her mother. This relationship was, as Owen Barfield writes about it in Saving the Appearances, one in which humanity felt itself integral to God's creation. "The background picture then," writes Barfield, referring to the time before the scientific revolution, "was of man as a microcosm within a macrocosm. It is clear that he did not feel himself isolated by his skin from the world outside him to quite the same extent as we do" (78).

The vestiges of this type of relationship appear in Bronte's work. William Crimsworth, of all Bronte's characters, has the most "skinless" type of relationship to the world. In particular, he seems extremely well integrated in time and in space. He moves from place to place in the novel in such a way that places appear to exist to foster his development. When he arrives in Belgium, he experiences his environment as a continuation of himself. The reverse is also true; William is a continuation of everything around him.

I thought my chamber looked stately and cheerful. It had such large windows--croisees that opened like doors, with such broad, clear panes of glass; such a great looking-glass stood on my dressing table--such a fine mirror glittered over the mantelpiece--the painted floor looked so clean and glossy; when I had dressed and was descending the stairs, the broad marble steps almost awed me, and so did the lofty hall into which they conducted. (47; ch. VII)

Everything in this space reflects or opens. We can look ahead from this scene to a similar scene, three novels later, of Lucy Snowe's experience in London, of her ecstatic immersion into "the heart of city life" (109; ch. 6). There is a tremendous sense in both the scene from The Professor and then the scene from Villette of the satisfaction that men and women experience when they feel themselves powerfully connected to the a world which simultaneously contains, opens for and reflects them. There is a feeling of tremendous security and promise. We are reminded of Jacques Lacan's description of the child who, looking in a mirror, sees an "I" (2).

This "I" experiences itself as whole.² This wholeness is most visible in The Professor. In Jane

² Lacan writes, "This jubilant assumption of his specular image by the child at the infans stage, still sunk in his motor incapacity and nursling dependence, would seem to exhibit in an exemplary situation the symbolic matrix in which the I is precipitated in a primordial form..." (2).

Eyre, Shirley and Villette, fragmentation appears. Divisions between people and things--the walls that surround gardens of schools in The Professor and Villette, the locked attic door in Jane Eyre and the turret which Caroline Helstone remembers from her childhood--become prominent.³ These divisions emphasize a character's aloneness, an aloneness further emphasized by the orphanhood of each of her main characters, an aloneness that seems somewhat surprising to the characters. Bronte thus writes not only of isolated individuals, but of the isolated individual in the nineteenth century. Once Jane Eyre has left Lowood and before she arrives at Thornfield, she speaks to us not only of that aloneness, but of the strangeness of it:

It is a very strange sensation to inexperienced youth to feel itself quite alone in the world, cut adrift from every connection, uncertain whether the port to which it is bound can be reached, and prevented by many impediments from returning to that it has quitted. (125; ch. 11)

Characters often portray themselves as having been cut adrift. Yet there is something else which the surprise at being alone hides; characters also cut

³ In Eros and Psyche, Karen Chase emphasizes Bronte's spatial representation of personality. While she focuses primarily on the representation of the self, her discussion is important to my understanding how Bronte designs a world view.

themselves adrift. Jane does, after all, strike John Reed and then go on to denounce his mother. Despite the power of the walls, despite the fear and loneliness that characters experience, characters are not diminished. Furthermore, they do not cling. Rather, characters gain in strength and defy the divisions that separate them from whom or what they want. We see this early in The Professor, when William Crimsworth defies the considerable power that surrounds him, power in the form of the mill and of the mill's owner, Edward Crimsworth. William tells us,

I should have pent in every sigh by which my heart might have ventured to intimate its distress under the closeness, smoke, monotony, and joyless tumult of Bigben Close, and its panting desire for freer and fresher scenes. (23; chap. IV)⁴

But William does not "pent in." Rather, he tells us, "I began to feel like a plant growing in humid darkness out of the slimy walls of a well" (23; chap. IV) And we see the longing for another type of environment in Jane Eyre's words upon leaving Lowood:

⁴ In his 1835 Philosophy of Manufactures Dr. Andrew Ure defines a factory in a way that reminds us of the individual's relationship to God, the part's relationship to the whole, in a God-centered world. "[A] vast automaton composed of various mechanical and intellectual organs, acting in uninterrupted concert for the production of a common object, all of them being subordinated to a self-regulated moving force" (quoted in Thompson 359-369).

My world had for some years been in Lowood: my experience had been of its rules and systems; now I remembered that the real world was wide, and that a varied field of hopes and fears, of sensations and excitements, awaited those who had courage to go forth into its expanse, to seek real life amidst its perils. (116; ch. 10)

There is, it appears, a longing for a world without fragmentation and divisions, a longing that leads a character forward in time, forward into his/her future. This same longing is associated with power, in the part, not in the whole, in the microcosm, apart from the macrocosm. And there is defiance in this power, defiance that Yorke Hunsden cultivates when he urges William Crimsworth to rebel against Edward, defiance that Jane displays in the Reed household, defiance that the mill workers display in Shirley. Questions emerge. What happens when the microcosm and the macrocosm become separated? What happens when the power of the microcosm appears no longer connected to the larger power, when it in fact thrives apart from the larger power?

What happens is this: In each of Bronte's novels, the character physically and psychically ricochets. He/she moves forward, exults in his/her ability to do so and then, as if recognizing the implications in feeling so much power contained within, places that power in the

hands of God. When Lucy Snowe wanders the streets of London, she tells us, "To do this, and to do it utterly alone, gave me perhaps an irrational but a real pleasure" (109; ch. 6). Lucy announces a change in herself and a new outlook toward the future: "My state of mind and all accompanying circumstances, were just now such as most to favour the adoption of a new, resolute and daring--perhaps desperate--line of action" (110; ch. 6). Next, Lucy makes plans to travel to Labassecour. She seems to be the agent of her own movement and the maker of her own plans. However, once she arrives in Villette, she places responsibility for all of her movement with God. Coincidences point to His power, reminding us that it is He who directs Lucy, not Lucy herself. She looks for the address of an inn provided by a stranger who turns out to be both Dr John and Graham Bretton. When she arrives at the address, she sees a nameplate indicating that this is Madame Beck's school--the very Madame Beck who Ginevra Fanshawe, an acquaintance just met on the boat from London to Labassecour, had told her was in need of an English governess. Events seem to be working together on Lucy's behalf. And the more remarkable the coincidences, the less Lucy seems to be the agent of her own actions. Lucy tells us:

No inn was this. A brass-plate embellished the great Portecochere: 'Pensionnat de Demoiselles' was the inscription; and beneath, a name, 'Madame Beck.'

I started. About a hundred thoughts volleyed through my mind in a moment. Yet I planned nothing and considered nothing: I had not time. Providence said, 'Stop here; this is your inn.' Fate took me in her strong hand; mastered my will; directed my actions: I rung the door-bell. (126; ch. 7)

As has been established in Chapter I, Bronte's characters experience pulls backward towards death and forward towards life. The movement forward parallels a movement of the nineteenth century, a movement of the individual towards both greater freedom and greater aloneness. The desire for greater freedom is also accompanied by a desire for divine protection.⁵ And that causes a backward pull. Robert Keefe writes: "The orphan is protected by God, who will give her both parentage and an eventual home. But there is an eventual catch....As in Helen Burns' theology, the entrance fee for the refuge of innocence is death" (105).

⁵ Desire is always difficult to define, no less difficult in regard to Charlotte Bronte's work. My own efforts in this regard have been aided by Leo Bersani's A Future for Astyanax: Character and Desire in Literature, John Kucich's Repression in Victorian Fiction, Nancy Armstrong's Desire and Domestic Fiction and Karen Chase's Eros and Psyche.

Bronte attempts to find ways to have her characters move forward and stay within God's care. Early in her novel-writing career she does this by articulating a philosophy of action in which desire has a particular place within a providential design. Yorke Hunsden, a character who sees possibilities for William Crimsworth when William does not see them for himself, suggests that humans are free agents who are faced with a rather simple choice, to reach for what God offers them or not to reach. He invokes this view when he condemns William Crimsworth for not speaking to certain women when provided the opportunity. Hunsden tells William,

'I verily believe all that is desirable on earth--wealth, reputation, love--will for ever to you be the ripe grapes on the high trellis; you'll look up at them; they will tantalise in you the lust of the eye; but they are out of reach: you have not the address to fetch a ladder, and you'll go away calling them sour.' (182; ch. XXII)

Through Hunsden, Bronte places the free individual in a universe governed by a beneficent providential order

which dispenses grapes and happiness.⁶ He suggests that William might act in relation to desire by stretching out his hand.

Of all Bronte's main characters, William Crimsworth in The Professor is the only one who can freely stretch out his hand towards the grapes. He does this most pronouncedly when he grabs Frances Henri, places her on his lap and proposes to her. Jane Eyre, Caroline Helstone and Lucy Snowe are not permitted the activities of reaching and grabbing. This is because as women they have traditionally been bound to roles in which they are the grapes. They are God's gift to man. Thus, in Villette, Lucy Snowe reassures Paulina de Bassompierre that Paulina's marriage to Graham Bretton is in accordance with a providential design.

'Providence has protected and cultured you, not only for your sake, but I believe for Graham's. His star, too, was fortunate: to develop fully the

⁶ Thomas Vargish cites Milton's view of providence in Paradise Lost (19):

Boundless the deep, because I am who fill
 Infinitude, nor vacuous space.
 Though I uncircumscribed myself retire,
 And put not forth my goodness, which is free
 To act or not, necessity and chance
 Approach not me, and what I will is fate.

(VII. 168-73)

I understand Bronte to be representing necessity and chance, along with fate, as part of a providential design.

best of his nature, a companion like you was needed; there you are ready....Some lives are blessed: it is the trace and lingering evidence of Eden.' (467-468; ch. 32)

For a woman character to be placed in the "lingering evidence of Eden" is for that character's actions to be tremendously circumscribed. She waits to be reached for or she reaches in response to his need for her. And like Jane Eyre, who must resist Rochester's advances after his marriage to Bertha is revealed, she must assiduously resist the reaching of would-be sinners. Ultimately her role requires that she not move. In particular, her role requires that she not move in relation to desire. When Elizabeth Bennet in Pride and Prejudice announces a desire to walk three miles to visit her ailing sister, her plan is cause for a warning: "'I admire the activity of your benevolence,' observed Mary, ' but every impulse of feeling should be guided by reason; and, in my opinion, exertion should always be in proportion to what is required'" (78; ch. 7). Once she takes the walk, she is condemned: "That she should have walked three miles so early in the day, in such dirty weather, and by herself, was almost incredible to Mrs Hurst and Miss Bingley; and Elizabeth was convinced that they held in contempt for it" (79; ch. 7).

Austen is among the first to grant a woman's desire physical expression in the novel. We can look ahead to the ecstatic affirmation of that expression offered by Molly Bloom at the end of Ulysses. We can look much later to a woman realizing that to be free is to own one's hands: In Beloved, Toni Morrison writes of Baby Suggs, "But suddenly she saw her hands and thought with a clarity as simple as it was dazzling, 'These hands belong to me. These my hands'" (141). And we can look to work much closer to Bronte's in time, if not in space, in which we see a bridge between Bronte's characters and Molly and Baby Suggs. We can think of Hester Prynne in The Scarlet Letter saying to Arthur Dimmesdale, "'What we did had a consecration of its own. We felt it so! We said so to each other!'" (179; ch. 17). Hawthorne presents desire as both consummated and consecrated outside of the rules of a given community. Hawthorne places that story in the new world, and in a newer world within that world, the world that Hester, Pearl and occasionally Arthur occupy.

There is a tremendous cost for acting outside of the rules that a given community designates as divinely ordained. Bronte emphasizes that cost, perhaps no more powerfully than in the suffering that Caroline Helstone endures when she steps outside her proscribed role in the novel.

Caroline's uncle reminds her of her assigned role:

'Good-night, uncle.'

'Hey! You've been gadding abroad all day--
visiting, dining out, and what not!'

'Only at the cottage.'

'And have you learnt your lessons?'

'Yes.'

'And made a shirt?'

'Only part of one.'

'Well that will do: stick to the needle--learn
shirt-making and gown-making, and pie-crust-making,
and you'll be a clever woman some day.' (122; ch. 7)

Caroline, however, momentarily slips out of the role that
her uncle recommends to her when she reaches for Robert
Moore. First, she visually appraises him: "I do like his
face--I do like his aspect--I do like him so much!"

(127; ch. 7). Then she pursues him: "'She sought 'bonnie
Robert's presence speedily'" (127; ch. 7). Finally, she
extends her hand to him. For a moment it appears as if
Caroline has been granted the opportunity to do the
reaching and as if Robert has been assigned the role of
the grapes. When his response is "cousin-like, brother-
like, friend-like, anything but lover-like," (127; ch. 7)
it is already too late for Caroline to retract the
significant gesture. We are told,

It was difficult to withdraw her hand from him, till he had bestowed at least something like a kind pressure; it was difficult to turn her eyes from his, till his looks had expressed something more and fonder than that cool welcome. (127-128; ch. 7)

This scene is a significant moment in Bronte's work. Caroline reaches for a man as a man might reach for a woman and she suffers for it. The passage that follows the description of Caroline's rebuff tells us of the price Caroline must pay for violating the limits imposed on her.

A lover masculine so disappointed can speak and urge explanation; a lover feminine can say nothing: if she did the result would be shame and anguish, inward remorse for self-treachery. Nature would brand such demonstration as a rebellion against her instincts, and would vindictively repay it afterwards by the thunderbolt of self-contempt smiting suddenly in secret. Take the matter as you find it: ask no questions; utter no remonstrances: it is your best wisdom. You expected bread and you have got a stone; break your teeth on it and don't shriek because the nerves are martyred: do not doubt that your mental stomach--if you have such a thing--is strong as an ostrich's--the stone will digest. You held out your hand for an egg, and fate

put into it a scorpion. Show no consternation: close your fingers firmly upon the gift; let it sting through your palm. Never mind: in time, after your hand and arm have swelled and quivered long with torture, the squeezed scorpion will die, and you will have learned the great lesson how to endure without a sob. (128; ch. 7)

In this passage, Bronte does what she does at many points in her novels. She imposes a voice of moral authority on a character. In this case, the narrator taunts Caroline by referring to the words of Matthew in the Bible:

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what is there of you whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish will he give him a serpent? (Chapter 7:7-10)

The narrator taunts Caroline by turning the biblical promise and the rhetorical questions which follow that promise against Caroline. Bronte also suggests, in the narrator's words in Shirley, the terrible unfairness, the wrongness, in denying women what is freely given men. We are reminded of Jane Eyre's cry from the leads at Thornfield:

Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties, and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer.... (141; ch. 12)

Caroline's cry adds to Jane's: "'Men of England! look at your poor girls, many of them fading around you, dropping off in consumption or in decline; or what is worse, degenerating to sour old maids,--envious, backbiting , wretched, because life is a desert to them...'" (378; ch. 22). Caroline's life is clearly a desert to her. The suffering that follows her reaching for Robert is characterized, first, by a tremendous sense of a disconnection from time: She speaks to herself: "'I have to live, perhaps, till seventy years. As far as I know, I have good health; half a century of existence may lie before me. How am I to occupy it? What am I to do to fill the interval of time which spreads between me and the grave?'" (190; ch. 10) In response to this question, Caroline becomes tremendously active. She undertakes good deeds in imitation of the "spinster" Miss Ainley. She studies. She walks. Yet, the activity seems to lack an authentic purpose or context. What appears authentic is the more fundamental entrenchment which pervades Caroline's existence. Caroline cannot

conceive of a role for herself. She cannot conceive of a world where she is anything but an unpicked grape. Thus she withers in an accelerated fashion. Her physical decay is accompanied by a spiritual stasis. She does not ask why she suffers. Nor does she raise the question Thomas Hardy raises in Tess of the D'Urbervilles-- "[W]here was the providence of her simple faith?" (119; ch. XI) Rather she embeds her doubt in a stale framework, the vestige of faith.

Caroline was a Christian; therefore in trouble she framed many a prayer after the Christian creed; preferring it with deep earnestness; begged for patience, strength, relief. This world, however, we all know, is the scene of trial and probation; and, for any favourable result her petitions had yet wrought, it seemed to her that they were unheard and unaccepted. She believed, sometimes, that God had turned his face from her. At moments she was a Calvinist, and sinking into the gulf of religious despair, she saw darkening over her the doom of reprobation. (342; ch. 20).

Caroline's physical and spiritual immobility threaten to ground the narrative. If she cannot reach for Robert Moore, if he is not going to reach for her, if she can imagine no departure from this world in which she is

paralyzed, then the novel threatens to die along with Caroline.

"There are forms of suffering," writes the theologian Dorothy Soelle, "that reduce one to a silence in which no discourse is possible any longer, in which a person ceases reacting as a human agent" (68). Caroline's suffering, if it does not restore her to a position in the narrative in which she can effectively carry the weight of the narrative alone, sustains her virtue. She does not simply cease reacting as a human agent as part of her suffering. She suffers in order to cease reacting as a human agent. She renounces her agency, the agency she demonstrated in reaching for Robert. She repeats this renunciation in a daily ritual in which she places herself at a window at the very moment when Robert Moore is passing by. She sees him, but she does not call and she does not reach. He clearly does not see her. Following this ritual she returns to bed to die a little more. The degree to which her suffering restores her virtue is indicated in the restoration of her mother. When Mrs. Pryor reveals that she is Caroline's mother, Caroline announces, "'But if you are my mother, the world is all changed to me. Surely I can live--I should like to recover--'" (410; ch. 24).

Caroline survives. But what will Caroline do? It does not appear, for the time being, that Robert will be reaching for Caroline. And there is no room in Caroline's world, in Propp's spheres of action, and in a providential design, for a woman to reach for a man in response to her own desire. The three--the world, the spheres and the design--work together to keep Caroline from reaching. Caroline can, however, remain "good." She can suffer. Thus, she not only retains a place in the narrative. She contributes to it, as we have discussed in Chapter I, by participating in its morality. Caroline thus starts to die but does not, like Helen Burns, consummate her death.⁷

The outstretched hand is a gesture that, in large part, dictates the conditions for action in Bronte's fiction. It is a gesture tightly bound to particular roles, to a narrative and to a providential design. It sustains a world view.⁸ It is a gesture not so easily left behind. The gesture gives strength to the image of a supreme God whose actions are beneficent and to a

⁷ In "Emphasis Added: Plots and Plausibilities in Women's Fiction," Nancy Miller makes a poignant claim that is helpful in considering Caroline Helstone's predicament. Referring to the ending of The Mill on the Floss, she writes "But as in so much women's fiction a world outside love proves to be out of the world altogether" (47).

⁸ Christopher Collins definition of a world view is helpful here: "A 'world view' seems to be a compilation of propositions that generate a more or less coherent image of humankind's place in the cosmos" (14).

humanity whose actions are accordingly supplicatory. The God invoked is the God of Genesis, who creates man in his own image, creates woman out of man and who then punishes man and woman when they--first woman, then man--eat the fruit which is forbidden them. The fear that keeps Bronte's characters confined within the boundaries of worlds is the fear of exile from the "lingering evidence of Eden." Yet what seems to drive characters towards extreme boundaries is what drives Eve to eat the fruit, a desire to share in God's powers. To partake of his godliness is to share in his agency. And to share in his agency is to do far more than simply stretch out one's hand or wait to be picked.⁹

As Peter Brooks has emphasized, desire calls for action (38). Yet it is extremely difficult for women characters to respond to desire with action. The blossoming of ambition in the nineteenth century novel is described by Brooks as follows:

The ambitious heroes of the nineteenth-century novel--those of Balzac, for instance--may regularly be conceived as 'desiring machines' whose presence in the text creates and sustains narrative movement through the forward march of desire, projecting the

⁹ In Micropolitics: Agency in a Postfeminist Era, the philosopher Patricia Mann writes about what happens when traditional forms of gendered behavior no longer make rational sense.

self onto the world through scenarios of desire
imagined and then acted upon. (39-40)

This is a phenomenon largely reserved for male characters.¹⁰ What Charlotte Bronte further demonstrates in her novels which focus on woman characters is that when desire and action are severed from each other, when no connections are possible, then a radical change is required to allow the narrative to go forward. Such a change is attempted when Bronte introduces Shirley Keeldar in Chapter 11 of Shirley. Bronte attempts to present Shirley as a woman who can reach. She presents Shirley to us as rather man-like. We see this in Shirley's brazen words: "'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...'" (213; ch. 11). Bronte raises our hopes. Yet she dashes them. Shirley, despite her differences from Caroline, shares the same world and the same sphere that Caroline occupies. Bronte writes,

The still parlour, the clean hearth, the window opening on the twilight sky, and showing its 'sweet regent,' new throned and glorious, suffice to make earth an Eden, life a poem for Shirley. A still,

¹⁰ Brooks distinguishes between male and female plots of ambition.

deep, inborn delight glows in her young veins;
 unmingled--untroubled; not to be reached or ravished
 by human agency, because by no human agency
 bestowed: the pure gift of God to his creature, the
 freer dower of Nature to her child. (374; ch. 22)

Shirley thus operates under the same set of rules as Caroline does and she reenacts Caroline's mistake. She, too, reaches and then, in her own way, squeezes scorpions. She does this when she reaches out her hand to a dog that she later discovers, may be rabid. After the dog bites her hand, Shirley turns an iron on herself to cauterize the wound. Her self-mutilation points to the fact that despite her name and position, Shirley cannot reach. As a woman, she cannot be a "desiring machine." Yet, Shirley, more than Caroline, recognizes her own dangerous capacity for reaching. In speaking of marriage, Shirley tells her uncle, "'I will accept no hand which cannot hold me in check'" (513; ch. 31). Shirley must wait to be picked and checked by Louis Moore.¹¹

Ultimately, Bronte's characters must leave behind worlds in which they cannot reach. This is the direction in which her fiction moves. We see this shift in this

¹¹ Helen Moglen writes, "In the last chapters of the novel, Shirley and Caroline recede into the background, deprived of energy and vitality" (188).

direction early in Jane Eyre when Jane ponders the approaching death of Helen Burns. Jane lingers outdoors:

I stayed behind a few minutes to plant in my garden a handful of roots I had dug up in the forest, and which I feared would wither if I left them till the morning. This done I lingered yet a little longer; the flowers smelt so sweet as the dew fell; it was such a pleasant evening, so serene, so warm; the still glowing west promised so fairly another fine day on the morrow; the moon rose with such majesty in the grave east. I was noting these things and enjoying them as a child might, when it entered my mind as it had never done before--'How sad to be lying now on a sick-bed, and to be in danger of dying! This world is pleasant--it would be dreary to be called from it, and to have to go, who knows where?' (110; ch. 9)

In response to this thought, Jane's self suddenly becomes concentrated in her mind. Mental activity is described in physical terms.

And then my mind made its first earnest effort to comprehend what had been infused into it concerning heaven and hell: and for the first time it recoiled baffled; and for the first time glancing behind, on each side, and before it, it saw all round an unfathomed gulf: it felt the one point where it

stood--the present; all the rest was formless cloud and vacant depth; and it shuddered at the thought of tottering, and plunging amid that chaos. (110-11; ch. 9)

Jane is, at this moment, one step away from a place outside of God's order. To cut oneself adrift from God's plan is to risk death. But to stay within God's plan is to deny the desire one feels, a desire that is tied to the things of this world.

For a woman in Bronte's fiction to act in relation to desire, she must occupy a new world. There is a sense that a new world cannot be made out of an old one, but that one world must end for another to take its place. We see this when Jane returns to Thornfield at the end of the novel to find Rochester and finds Thornfield in ruins, leaving her no choice but to proceed to Ferndean. And we see it in a much broader sense in Shirley when a mill appears where fairies were once seen. We see it most profoundly in Lucy Snowe's violent attack on the nun at the end of Villette. Yet, it is not so easy for characters to display destructive powers.

In Villette, Bronte does not have Lucy destroy the world she occupies with Miss Marchmont. Rather she portrays the world as shrinking to the dimensions in which there is nothing or no one for whom Lucy might reach.

Two hot, close rooms thus became my world; and a crippled old woman, my mistress, my friend, my all....I forgot that there were woods, rivers, seas, an everchanging sky outside the steam-dimmed lattice of this sick-chamber. I was almost content to forget it. All within me became narrowed to my lot. (97; ch. 4)

In this world, Lucy's inner life shrinks to the narrow dimensions of her outer world. Like Caroline, Lucy does not move inside or out. Then, Bronte offers Lucy a way out of this world without having Lucy die. Lucy is jettisoned. Miss Marchmont's death expels Lucy from this confined world. This expulsion is not represented as an occasion for rejoicing. Rather, we are informed that Lucy is forced from a world that is familiar to her into, to use Jane Eyre's words, "who knows where." Lucy, "thin, haggard and hollow-eyed; like a sitter-up at night, like an over-wrought servant, or a placeless person in debt" (103; ch. 5) is jettisoned out of her confined existence. This expulsion is represented as a divine fiat. Lucy tells us:

For these things I would have crawled on with her for twenty years, if for twenty years longer her life of endurance had been protracted. But another decree was written. It seemed I must be stimulated into action. I must be goaded, driven, stung,

forced to energy....I had wanted to compromise with Fate: to escape occasional great agonies by submitting to a whole life of privation and small pains. Fate would not be pacified; nor would Providence sanction this shrinking sloth and cowardly indolence. (97; ch. 4)

Providence, it appears, joins forces with Lucy's desire to live. It sanctions the desire. The desire then explodes in the novel. On the night Miss Marchmont dies, Lucy finds herself disturbed by a storm:

Three times in the course of my life, events had taught me that these strange accents in the storm--this restless, hopeless cry--denote a coming state of the atmosphere unpropitious to life. Epidemic diseases, I believed, were often heralded by a gasping, sobbing, tormented, long-lamented east wind. Hence, I inferred, arose the legend of the Banshee. I fancied, too, I had noticed--but was not philosopher enough to know whether there was any connection between the circumstances--that we often at the same time hear of disturbed volcanic action in distant parts of the world; or rivers suddenly rushing above their banks; and of strange high tides flowing furiously in on low sea-coasts. (98; ch. 4)

This is the desire, in cataclysmic proportions, that Peter Brooks speaks of when he refers to the condition of

arousal which calls for action (38). This desire is extremely expansive and diffuse. It requires that Lucy occupy a new location in relation to God. To find that location Lucy must follow biblical precedent. She must wander. She must head out not knowing where she is going but in the good faith that she will be directed somewhere. This period of wandering allows for Lucy to move herself and for God to move her; it provides an opportunity for collusion between God's action and human action, a type of collusion which works well within a providential design. Walking in the dark, experiencing "inward darkness" (103; ch. 5) Lucy is dramatically affected by the Aurora Borealis.

Some new power it seemed to bring. I drew in energy with the keen, low breeze that blew on its path. A bold thought was sent to my mind; my mind was made strong to receive it.

'Leave this wilderness,' it was said to me, 'and go out hence.'

'Where?' was the query.

I had not very far to look: gazing from this country parish in the flat, rich middle of England--

I mentally saw within reach what I had never yet beheld with my bodily eyes; I saw London. (104; ch. 5)

Lucy does not merely formulate a plan. She does not simply get an idea. Rather, she conceives a place, which she envisions. Ultimately she will occupy that place.

This process which begins with Miss Marchmont's death and which ends with Lucy's envisioning of London is a process that funnels Lucy's explosive desire into the structure on which the novel depends. Central to that structure is the idea of Providence. God allows Lucy the desire to live. He contains and directs that desire. He "forces" her to act. However, from the moment that Lucy envisions London, her actions are newly burdened. Lucy soon occupies a world in which the desire to live will never be satiated by mere survival. Lucy lives by God's doing. The question remains as to whether her doing will take her beyond his domain.

Within her general insistence that the belief in providence shapes action in Jane Eyre, Barbara Hardy allows that "[t]here are places in [Jane Eyre] when this Providential form is a source not of unity but disintegration" (64). Hardy does not seem to focus on the middle ground not only in Jane Eyre, but in the novels that follow, that area within which an ideology in fiction is faced with resistance, that area in which the form is neither absolutely stalwart nor absolutely collapsed. It is in that middle ground that Bronte portrays active women characters.

Chapter III: Action and Change

Central to many philosophical theories of action is the idea that human action is the source of change. "By action," writes Brian O'Shaughnessy, "we irreducibly alter the state of the universe; a form or pattern appears that was not there before, the existence of which does not seem to follow in any way from the physical state of the universe beforehand" (368). O'Shaughnessy goes on to describe this alteration in terms which suggest the great potential of human action. "This," he claims, "is creation" (368).

The idea that men can act is thus problematic when one considers that idea next to the idea that events in human life are ordered, destined by a force outside of humanity-- God. The idea that women can act is even more problematic. Bronte's fiction is crucial to our understanding of how the novel addresses this problem. Bronte attempts to keep her narratives consistent with the idea that divine providence is the ultimate force in human life. Yet, as often as Bronte insists on humanity's relative weakness and insignificance in a God-centered world, she also reveals a power not so easily contained. This power is associated with women. What emerges in her portrayal of action and change is a vision of human action that emphasizes both the

maintenance and defiance of boundaries, boundaries which keep the narrative within a providential design.

To understand how Bronte maintains and defies boundaries in her work it is necessary to think of her work in spatial terms. Space is, as Karen Chase emphasizes, an "imaginative" condition in Bronte's fiction.¹ Change is often accompanied by an entrance or exit--the crossing of a particular boundary. The desire to cross a particular boundary and the complex impediments to that crossing are already quite pronounced in Bronte's earliest novel, The Professor. In The Professor, Bronte emphasizes humanity's banishment from the garden of Eden and entrance into a world where humanity is required to work. In her "principles on the subject of incident" which appear in the preface to The Professor,² she asserts, "I said to myself that my hero should work his way through life as I had seen real living men work theirs....As Adam's son he should share Adam's doom and drain throughout life a mixed and moderate cup of enjoyment." (xi) William reenacts those words when he looks out on the town where he will go and work for his brother.

¹ "The self," writes Chase, "its relations, its dreads, its possibilities exist for Bronte as so many spatial configurations....Such central issues as desire and judgement, or romance and Bildung, receive their most compelling expression in images of distance and proximity, low and high regions, sight and sightlessness, compartments and thresholds, doors and windows--and most generally, in terms of confinement, exposure and prospect" (91).

² The preface was written after Bronte had written Jane Eyre and Shirley.

First he emphasizes what he is leaving behind:

I was early up and walking in the park-like meadow surrounding the house. The autumn sun rising over the --shire hills, disclosed a pleasant country; woods brown and mellow varied the fields from which the harvest had been lately carried; a river, gliding between the woods, caught on its surface the somewhat cold gleam of the October sun and sky.... (10; chap. II)

Then, there are the signs of another world, the world that William is about to enter: "at frequent intervals along the banks of the river, tall, cylindrical chimneys, almost like the slender round towers, indicated the towers which the trees half concealed..."(10; chap. II) William then invokes the words that remind us that man is banished from Eden and required to work as a disciplinary action: "'Look at that sooty smoke in that hollow, and know there is your post! There you cannot dream, you cannot speculate and theorise-- there you shall out and work!'" (10; ch. 11).

There is much to consider in Bronte's adaptation of the biblical banishment from Eden. While in Genesis, humanity is punished for Eve's eating of the forbidden fruit, in The Professor, William punishes himself by entering the industrial world. Thus Bronte brings the Genesis story into her own time. In addition, he denies himself activities that we know were cherished by Charlotte Bronte--dreaming,

speculating, theorizing--activities fundamentally related to writing. In the opening pages of The Professor, she thus places her characters in a post-fall relationship to God, one that emphasizes His control of humanity and one in which humanity is punished for "activities" that Charlotte Bronte carried out in the very creation of The Professor.

Obedience is a central concept in this post-fall relationship to God. In Bronte's work there is a clear chain of command in which characters not only are required to obey those who have authority over them, but to exercise authority over those placed beneath them. Bronte's characters thus appear in their relationships with each other to serve God by imitating God.³ William tells us, once he is employed as a teacher at M. Pelet's school, of his own response to behavior he describes as "insubordination" (56; ch. VII).

When I had brought down my lesson to the lowest level of my dullest pupil's capacity--when I had shown myself the mildest, the most tolerant of masters--a word of impertinence, a movement of obedience, changed me at once into a despot. I offered them but one alternative--submission and acknowledgement of error, or ignominious expulsion. (56; chap. VII)

³ Writing of archaic man, Mircea Eliade observes that "cosmic repetition of paradigmatic gestures reveals an original ontology" (The Myth of the Eternal Return 5). This repetition, even at a far greater remove, reveals a hierarchy of relations.

Throughout Bronte's fiction we see a world in which these are the choices available to humanity. One submits or one is expelled, one forces others to submit or one expels. Yet, we see encroaching on a world in which men are masters to be loved or hated, another world in which the very basis for the hierarchy of authority is threatened. Early in The Professor, in Bronte's portrayal of Yorke Hunsden, we see a man who has qualities not normally associated with "masters." William tells us, as he scrutinizes Hunsden, of something surprisingly feminine in Hunsden's appearance: "I had never observed him closely before...I was surprised now, on examination, to perceive how small, and even feminine, were his lineaments..." (27; ch. IV). The fact that there is something feminine about Hunsden is linked to other qualities that appear to be hidden or disguised:

I discerned there would be contrasts between his inward and outward man; contentions, too; for I suspected his soul had more of will and ambition than his body had of fibre and muscle. Perhaps, in these incompatibilities of the 'physique' with the 'morale,' lay the secret of that fitful gloom; he would and could not, and the athletic mind scowled scorn on its more fragile companion. As to his good looks, I should have liked to have a woman's opinion on that subject: it seemed to me that his face might produce the same effect on a lady that a very piquant and interesting, though

scarcely pretty, female face would on a man' (27; ch. IV).

William's scrutiny of Hunsden is as important as what that scrutiny reveals. William appears to be studying Hunsden and doing so raise important questions that will reverberate throughout The Professor and the novels to follow. What makes things happen in the novel? Where is it--this source of agency--located? What form, if any, does it take? William questions whether it is "inward" or "outward," whether it is located in the "soul" or the "body." These questions become connected to a larger question that Hunsden's ambiguity in terms of gender points towards. Is agency male or female? Or is it both? Hunsden may be ambiguous in terms of gender. The novel allows him this. But the novel requires that William act like a man. Hunsden, early in the novel, reminds William of this when he goads William to rebel against the tyranny of Edward Crimsworth: "'[I]f you are patient because you think it a duty to meet insult with submission, you are an essential sap, and in no shape the man for my money...'" (29; ch. IV). Bronte uses William and the power associated with his manhood to give what is "inward" more prominence in the novel. In a scene that precedes William's proposal of marriage to Frances, William arrives at Frances' home and hears her voice through the closed door to her room. He secretly listens to her reading a poem in French. On behalf

of the reader, he offers a translation from French to English. Once inside her apartment, he takes, against her will, the papers from which she had been reading and again, in translation, reads the rest of the poem to the reader. The poem, "Master and Pupil," was "not exactly the writer's own experience, but a composition by portions of that experience suggested" (193; ch. 23). The poem refers to the experience of Frances, who in the poem is Jane, and her "master" who is modeled after William. In the poem itself, the master speaks while Jane remains mute.

Rebecca Rodolff, who claims persuasively that "the idea of the subject of Jane Eyre and of the feminine point of view...was most likely grasped in the act of writing the end of The Professor" (72), discusses this scene, referring to William's "providential hearing of the loved one's voice" (75). She alerts us to the fact that "[s]he is reciting a poem that, we believe with Crimsworth, expresses 'the language of her own heart.' And this poem "Master and Pupil," probably written in 1843 in Brussels, also expresses the novelist's heart" (75). What is striking about this scene is the the layered hiding and revelation of the heart. Frances hides her words (she thinks) from the object of her love, her master, William. William, God's emissary, is granted a providential hearing. He not only hears; he brings what he hears into the narrative. He reads Frances' words. Therefore, we read her words.

In this scene William both takes possession of Frances and grants Frances the permission to not only write but to have her words read. The ending of the novel includes a similar double move. William marries Frances and allows Frances to work. When Frances proposes beginning a school, William's magnanimous response is reported to us as follows:

I put no obstacle in her way; raised no objection; I knew she was not one who could live quiescent and inactive, or even comparatively inactive. Duties she must have to fulfil, and important duties; work to do--and exciting, absorbing, profitable work; strong faculties stirred in her frame, and they demanded full nourishment, free exercise: mine was not the hand ever to starve or cramp them; no, I delighted in offering them sustenance, and in clearing them wider space for action. (220; ch. XXV)

As the novel draws to a close and more attention is brought to focus on Frances, she is split into two characters. William tells us,

As to this same Mrs. Crimsworth, in one sense she was become another woman, though in another she remained unchanged. So different was she under different circumstances, I seemed to possess two wives. The faculties of her nature, already disclosed when I married her, remained fresh and fair; but other faculties shot up strong, branched out broad, and quite

altered the external character of the plant. Firmness, activity, and enterprise, covered with grave foliage, poetic feeling and fervour; but these flowers were still there, preserved pure and dewy under the umbrage of later growth and hardier nature: perhaps I only in the world knew the secret of their existence, but to me they were ever ready to yield an exquisite fragrance and present a beauty as chaste as radiant. (221; ch. XXV)

William, in his behavior towards Frances, allows her a chance to participate more widely in the world, to participate in a way that Bronte valued for her characters. He allows her to defy containment. Yet, she can only defy certain boundaries if a boundary appears within her, if the wife is separated from the directress. The ending of the novel reminds us of Frances' role in the novel. Frances is, more than anything else, the grape waiting to be picked, the reward offered to William. Her picking signals the end of the narrative.

While the "wider space for action" that William clears for Frances points more to his power to provide it rather than her ability to fill it, that space suggests possibilities that will be realized in the later novels, most powerfully in Villette. In a conversation that takes place among William, Frances and Hunsden once William and Frances are safely married, we see Bronte beginning to

create the figure Vashti whose performance will so radically affect Lucy Snowe. We learn, in this conversation, that Hunsden loves a woman named Lucia. He shows Frances and William a miniature of her. William is blind to what he sees in a way that Dr John will be blind to Vashti. Frances sees in the miniature what William does not (in the same way that Lucy Snowe will see in Vashti what Dr John does not). When William asks Frances what she sees, she responds:

'I am sure Lucia once wore chains and broke them,' was the strange answer. 'I do not mean matrimonial chains,' she added, correcting herself, as if she feared misinterpretation, 'but social chains of some sort. The face is that of one who has made an effort, and a successful and triumphant effort, to wrest some vigorous and valued faculty from insupportable constraint; and when Lucia's faculty got free, I am certain it spread wide pinions and carried her higher than----' She hesitated. (231; ch. XXV)

It is significant that Lucia is introduced as a framed image in The Professor, an image that threatens to become a character that might defy the restraint of the frame. However, that defiance while suggested is not realized in The Professor. Lucia is examined by the main characters, but she has no real place in their lives and no real place in the narrative. This is because Hunsden cannot marry Lucia. Frances continues her "reading" of the miniature:

'Lucia has trodden the stage....You admitted her originality, her fearlessness, her energy of body and mind: you delighted in her talent, whatever that was, whether song, dance, or dramatic representation; you worshipped her beauty, which was of the sort after your own heart: but I am sure she filled a sphere from whence you would never have thought of taking a wife.'

(231-232; ch. XXV)

For a woman to defy the constraints of the narrative, for her to step out of the sphere where she is, more than anything else, a grape waiting to be picked, the possibility must be raised, not only that she will not marry but that the novel will not depend on her marriage as a point of closure. This is a dangerous possibility because that marriage sustains a certain hierarchy and topography in the novel.⁴ The outermost limit for any character's action, what Kenneth Burke would refer to as the circumference for the scene,⁵ is the boundary which separates humanity's actions from God's. Like the young Stephen Dedalus who observes that "the countries were in continents and the

⁴ In Tradition Counter Tradition: Love and the Form of Fiction, Joseph Allan Boone discusses the role of marriage in regard to narrative structure.

⁵ Burke borrows the term "circumference" from William James. Burke writes, "This time all we need for our text is a single word from James, his word 'circumference,' as when he says that, if one would avoid pantheism, 'the Creator must be the all, and the act by which the creature is set over against him has its motive within the creative circumference'" (77).

continents were in the world and the world was in the universe" (11; ch. 1), Bronte's characters are located within concentric spaces. The power of an individual diminishes in relation to his/her distance from the original source of all power. Man serves God by participating in his will. The participation is diminished once it reaches woman who participates in God's will through man. We see this in The Professor. As long as William is the protagonist and as long as Frances is essentially William's reward, her enterprise is not a source for change in the novel. Rather, her enterprise is subsumed within marriage. Yet, there is some advantage in being removed from the ultimate source of power. What remains within cannot be "picked." It cannot be used to place value on someone else's achievement.

That carefully delineated inner space is represented in the physical world of the novel. The garden, first in The Professor and then more richly in Villette, comes to represent a female interior space that is guarded against but not impenetrable by men. William Crimsworth gains access to the space through Mdlle. Reuter. In Villette, the space becomes even more central to the events in the novel. M. Paul from his secret observation post reads female character; Dr John, through his position as a physician, comes and goes repeatedly and writes letters to Lucy that are buried there. M. le Comte de Hamal throws love letters to Ginevra Fanshawe through a window. In a letter to

Ginevra he confesses to having entered a chamber "whose lattice overlooks your prison-ground....How tremblingly I approached the window and glanced into your Eden - an Eden for me though a desert for you" (178; ch. 12) Within Christian iconography the garden represents Eden, the terrestrial paradise of Adam and Eve and the sin which led to their expulsion; the garden also represents redemption through the entrance of God into the virgin womb, the garden of Mary (Stewart 38). When M. Paul, the Catholic, tells Lucy, "My book is this garden; its contents are human nature - female human nature. I know you all by heart" (453; ch. 31) he puts the garden to use as allegory. He reads it.⁶ And when Lucy asks him about how he can see what happens in the garden at night, he acknowledges that he has access to the space: "'[T]he garden itself is open to me....I possess the key and thus come and go at pleasure'" (455; ch. 31). Lucy, in her chastising remarks to M. Paul, condemns him for reading what should not be read and entering what should not be entered: "'To study the human heart thus, is to banquet secretly and sacreligiously on Eve's apples. I wish you were a Protestant'" (455-456; ch. 31).

The garden, in Bronte's work, is linked to a number of ideas that, in collision with each other, give Bronte's writing such power. The garden is, on one hand, the

⁶ In The Enclosed Garden: The Tradition and the Image in Seventeenth Century Poetry, Stanley Stewart discusses the allegorical application of the garden.

goodness that is associated with women. It is also something that Bronte associates with complexity and change in the form of men who penetrate the space. Women characters in particular, first Mdlle Reuter in The Professor and then Madame Beck in Villette, are the keepers of this space.⁷ They both cultivate the garden and contain it.

When Mdlle. Reuter, who directs the school where William is Frances's teacher, becomes aware of the attention that Crimsworth is directing at Frances, she admonishes him claiming to have Frances's best interest at heart:

'[T]he sentiment of amour-propre has a somewhat marked preponderance in her character; celebrity has a tendency to foster this sentiment, and in her it should be rather repressed--she rather needs keeping down than bringing forward; and then I think, Monsieur--it appears to me that ambition, literary ambition especially, is not a feeling to be cherished in the mind of a woman: would not Mdlle. Henri be much safer and happier if taught to believe that in the quiet discharge of social duties consists her real vocation, than if stimulated to aspire after applause and publicity?' (133; ch. XVIII)

⁷ In writing about Jane Eyre, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar note, "Women in Jane's world, acting as agents for men, maybe the keepers of other women. But both keepers and prisoners are bound by the same chains" (Madwoman 351).

This speech is a key moment in Bronte's work. Bronte directs at Frances the same sentiments that had, with supposed best intentions, been directed by Robert Southey at the author herself. Southey's now famous admonishment is clearly a source for Mdlle. Reuter's words:

The day dreams in which you habitually indulge are likely to induce a distempered state of mind; and, in proportion as all the ordinary uses of the world seem to you flat and unprofitable, you will be unfitted for them without becoming fitted for anything else. Literature cannot be the business of a woman's life, and it ought not to be. The more she is engaged in her proper duties, the less leisure will she have for it, even an accomplishment and a recreation. To those duties you have not been called, and when you are you will be less eager for celebrity. You will not seek in the imagination for excitement, of which the vicissitudes of this life, and the anxieties from which you must not hope to be exempted, be your state what it may, will bring with them but too much. (Wise and Symington 1: 154-155)

Within the scope of Bronte's work, the subject of literary ambition, its cultivation and repression, thus makes its first appearance in The Professor. It is important to stress at this point the place that this subject has within the very large context of the narrative

of The Professor. A woman's writing is presented as contained within the sphere that dictates a woman's role in the novel. Within that sphere, it cannot be a force for change. Yet, the fact that there is so much emphasis in The Professor on both defying and maintaining the boundaries of that sphere point to significant developments in Bronte's work. Early in her work, Bronte presents writing as powerfully linked to that which is within women, which must be protected against change. Increasingly, in particular in Villette, writing will be presented as a force for change.

Significant to that development is the fact that Jane Eyre develops. Jane first appears to us as a child. As a child, she is burdened with the desire to live, and burdened with the weight of a narrative that looms ahead of her. We know that this desire to live will be most problematically and richly developed in Villette. We think of Lucy Snowe's claim that she is "forced to act" as being conceived in the placement on the window-seat of a young girl who must act if the novel is to move forward. Yet we wonder, given the boundaries that confine Frances in The Professor how Jane will do that. The question emerges: How can Jane act in a narrative structure in which women figure most prominently as rewards offered to men? How can Jane act within the boundaries of a fictive world in which women are located at such a distance from God, where their relation to his will is largely expressed through

relationships to men? How can they function in a narrative design which reflects and affirms that distance?

The boundaries that appear early in Jane Eyre suggest that there is much in Jane that requires limits and containment. Jane is no less than imprisoned. She is enclosed on the window seat, locked in the red room and sentenced to Lowood Institution. The young Jane, as helpless as she might appear, clearly has a will that looms as a threat. We see that will in Jane's attack on John Reed and in the words with which she denounces him. "'You are like a murderer--you are like a slave-driver--you are like the Roman emperors'" (43; ch. 1). Jane has been reading Goldsmith's History of Rome. She recognizes Nero and Caligula in John Reed. She sees in relation to her cousin's tyranny, not just the extent of her servitude, but just how much of her will she must exercise in order to not be his slave. And she seizes opportunities to exercise that will. Yet the cost of that exercise is great because Jane is both an orphan and a child who is dependent on the Reeds. Thus when Jane denounces Aunt Reed, her remorse matches if not supersedes her sense of victory:

A child cannot quarrel with its elders, as I had done - cannot give its furious feelings uncontrolled play, as I had given mine--without experiencing afterwards the pain of remorse and the chill of reaction. A ridge of lighted heath, alive, glancing, devouring, would have

been a great emblem of my mind when I accused and menaced Mrs. Reed; the same ridge, black and blasted after the flames are dead, would have represented as meetly my subsequent condition, when half an hour's silence and reflection had shown me the madness of my conduct, and the dreariness of my hated and hating position. (69-70; ch. 3)

Jane's mind is thus alternately "alive, glancing, devouring" and "black and blasted" in response to the exercise of her will in relation to another's. And throughout much of the novel, Jane experiences pendulum-like swings between the exercise of power and the diminishment of power.

Ultimately, the struggles Jane Eyre experiences in relation to the exercise of her will reflect on that relationship. Almost everything that happens in Jane Eyre is fraught with implications concerning the nature of that relationship. And Jane Eyre far more than William Crimsworth appears to enter into negotiations with God concerning the extent that her own will may be a source of action. These negotiations are rendered as part of the deliberations that take up pages and pages of the novel, deliberations that point to Jane's very intention to act.

When Jane enters into negotiations with God, she often occupies a boundary. When, for instance, Jane considers leaving the "world" of Lowood, she goes to a window, opens it and gazes out: She tells us, "My eye passed all other

objects to rest on those most remote, the blue peaks. It was those I longed to surmount; all within their boundary of rock and heath seemed prison-ground, exile limits" (117; ch. 10). Never is Jane's desire for freedom more pronounced than when it presses against prison bars. Unfortunately, such freedom is not available to Jane. The very landscape suggests "prison-ground, exile limits." Yet, Jane appears to test those limits.

Jane begins this process of testing by announcing a desire: "I desired liberty; for liberty I gasped..." (117; ch. 10). She quickly translates that desire into prayer: "[F]or liberty I uttered a prayer..." (117; ch. 10). While liberty may be what Jane desires, it is not what Jane can have. She tells us,

[I]t [the prayer] seemed scattered on the wind then faintly blowing. I abandoned it and framed a humbler supplication. For change, stimulus. That petition, too, seemed swept off into vague space. 'Then,' I cried, half desperate, 'grant me at least a new servitude!' (117; ch. 10)

Jane begins her bargaining with God by asking for liberty and ends with settling for servitude. Although Jane moves, her role as one who serves assures her a stable relationship with God, wherever she goes. Jane moves but remains within God's domain. Yet, Jane seems to have gained for herself, within that domain, a slightly larger ground

for the exercise of her own will. The nature of her servitude seems to change--incrementally. Jane congratulates herself for what appears to be something of an achievement:

'A new servitude! There is something in that,' I soliloquized (mentally, be it understood; I did not talk aloud). 'I know there is, because it does not sound too sweet. It is not like such words as Liberty, Excitement, Enjoyment: delightful sounds truly, but no more than sounds for me, and so hollow and fleeting that it is a mere waste of time to listen to them. But Servitude! That must be a matter of fact. Any one may serve. I have served here eight years; now all I want is to serve elsewhere. Can I not get so much of my own will! Is not the thing feasible! Yes - yes - the end is not so difficult, if I had only a brain active enough to ferret out the means of attaining it' (117-118; ch. 10)

A certain amount of stasis is maintained in all this effort to keep characters in boundaried space. Yet as boundaries go up or as movement is diminished to physical transit between places where characters serve the same role, our attention is drawn to the power of a character's will--a will that has an existence apart from God's will, a will that looms as a force for change. Bronte associates that will with something that occupies the boundaries between

worlds. And as this will presents itself as increasingly distinct from God's will, as servitude sees less capable of containing it, the post-fall relationship between God and humanity is threatened. In The Professor Bronte grants a woman character that will, but heavily restricts it within the narrative structure. In Jane Eyre, she increasingly renders the will as a greater force against restrictions. Yet, Bronte portrays a reaction against that force.

Jane makes her most significant gain in force once she meets Rochester. The first meeting--when Rochester falls from his horse and Jane then helps him--is a heavily laden portent of things to come, in particular Rochester's eventual crippling and Jane's ensuing return to him. In all its auspiciousness, the meeting appears to be part of the plot that God provides. Jane appears to be the grape that Rochester will pick. Yet, Jane appears to gain, in this first meeting, a power that is not necessarily commensurate with her role in that plot. She becomes a bit impatient with the passivity that servitude requires of her. After the encounter, she tells us:

The incident had occurred and was gone for me: it was an incident of no moment, no romance, no interest in a sense: yet it marked with change one single hour of a monotonous life. My help had been needed and claimed: I had given it: I was pleased to have done something; trivial, transitory though the deed was, it was yet an

active thing, and I was weary of an existence all passive. (147; ch. 12)

Jane speaks of the effect that this incident has on her in terms of "change." And from this moment on Jane does appear to change. She appears to be become increasingly substantial--"So happy, so gratified did I become with this new interest added to life, that I ceased to pine after kindred: my thin-crescent destiny seemed to enlarge; the blanks of existence were filled up; my bodily health improved; I gathered flesh and strength" (177; ch. 15). In her changed condition, she begins to appear a bit dangerous. Jane unapologetically claims power for herself. When she returns to Gateshead to the scenes of her earliest servitude, she tells us, "I still felt as a wanderer on the face of the earth; but I experienced firmer trust in myself and my own powers, and less withering dread of oppression" (256; ch. 21). As forgiving as Jane tries to appear--"The gaping wound of my wrongs, too was now quite healed; and the flame of resentment extinguished" (256; ch. 21)--one notices that when she leaves Gateshead her aunt is dead and her cousins bound for no good end. As she gains power and strength, Jane appears to not simply leave one world for another; rather, she appears to destroy one in order to occupy another--the one she will occupy with Rochester. Rochester heralds her returns to Thornfield with these

words: "'She comes from the other world--from the abode of people who are dead...'" (272; ch. 22).

A dangerous potential is thus manifested in Jane. She is a threat to the world populated with Neros and Caligulas. She will not be a slave. Jane's powers are increasingly "alive, glancing, devouring" (69; ch. 4). That this potential is also expressed in the figure of Bertha is apparent; this will be discussed in the following chapter. It is enough for now to say that Jane feels the power to make change within herself, that she experiences that power in a way that makes her less dependent on God's power. Although she claims to still be a wanderer, she does not behave as one who depends on God's guidance. More and more she behaves as if she is the agent of her own actions.

It is perhaps no surprise then that when change comes to Jane Eyre, it mocks her will and reveals her hubris. Change, when it comes, comes in lightning-bolt fashion from God.

In Jane Eyre, the experience of change is most powerfully rendered following the interrupted wedding ceremony and the presentation of Bertha. Jane, having returned to her room, summarizes the events of the day in an attempt to diminish their power.

The morning had been a quiet morning enough--all except the brief scene with the lunatic: the transaction in the church had not been noisy; there was no explosion

of passion, no loud altercation, no dispute, no defiance or challenge, no tears, no sobs: a few words had been spoken, a calmly pronounced objection to the marriage made; some stern, short questions put by Mr Rochester; answers, explanations given, evidence adduced; an open admission of the truth had been uttered by my master; then the living proof had been seen; the intruders were gone, and all was over. (323; ch. 26)

As much as Jane seeks to reduce the events of the day to still images, as much as she attempts to empty them of movement, of any sign of change, as much as her dead-pan narration suggests that the "brief scene with the lunatic" alters nothing, Jane is, beyond a doubt, altered. And the nature of that alteration as apparent as it is mystifying. She tells us: "I was in my own room as usual--just myself, without obvious change: nothing had smitten me, or scathed me, or maimed me. And yet where was the Jane Eyre of yesterday?--where was her life?--where were her prospects?" (323; ch. 26)

Jane looks to her environment and to her self for evidence that all is as it was. We think back to William entering the room in which the doors seem to exist but to open for him, the windows but to reflect his presence. This is not the case for Jane. She is radically dislocated in time and space. The experience of not getting married

leaves her with no place to do or be in the world. She has no sphere. She has no function. She looks for her self in relation to the space which has defined her.⁸ She finds herself nowhere. This appears to be the experience of change.

Jane is changed and she is powerless to defy it. Change, as Jane experiences it, has nothing to do with her will, her intentions, her movements or her bargaining with God. When Jane next asks the question--"What am I to do?" (325; ch. 27)--all the forms of "doing" to which she had aspired, all the forms of action by which she had hoped to make change, appear futile. Jane therefore forsakes her seemingly useless will and looks to God for direction. Yet the answer her mind gives--"Leave Thornfield at once"--restores her will to her. Jane responds, "I cannot do it" (325; ch. 27).

Jane's mind then splinters into parts which participate in a "morality play" (Ewbank 185). The will of God is increasingly incorporated into Conscience. The play is violent: "[A]nd Conscience, turned tyrant, held Passion by the throat, told her tauntingly, she had yet but dipped her dainty feet in the slough, and swore with that arm of iron

⁸ In Simians, Cyborgs and Women, Donna Haraway writes about "situated knowledges" arguing that [t]he only way to find a larger vision is to be somewhere in particular. The science question in feminism is about objectivity as positioned rationality" (196). It is striking that Jane experiences change as finding herself nowhere in a place which was very recently a somewhere for her.

he would thrust her down to unsounded depths of agony" (325; ch. 27).

The scene reverberates with earlier scenes as well as with ones that will follow in which a character is tormented--yet the source and location of the tormentor is not always clear. The tormentor seems both outside of and within the character. There seem to be two voices rather than one. Thus, in The Professor, when William Crimsworth tells us "I forced my eye to scrutinise this prospect" (10; ch. II), the prospect of the town where he will submit to the despotism of his brother, he exacts the force upon himself, yet adopts the posture of the archangel talking to Adam as he banishes him from the garden. In Shirley, when Caroline Helstone stretches out her hand towards Robert Moore only to be rebuffed, the passage that follows tells her, "You held out your hand for an egg, and fate put into it a scorpion. Show no consternation: close your fingers firmly upon the gift; let it sting through your palm" (128; ch. 7). The voice in this passage does not seem to be the narrator's voice. It seems to emerge from within Caroline; yet it is too authoritative to be Caroline's.

Each of these passages suggests that characters, in moments of crisis, incorporate the will of God, that they act out his words so that they become expressions of his will. And what is not an expression of his will is to be destroyed. The very pain that characters inflict upon

themselves barely masks another pain. If humanity begins to locate God within, then humanity cannot look outside of itself for God. This is the pain Jane feels when, having decided to leave Thornfield, she looks to God to move her: "'Let me be torn away then,' I cried. 'Let another help me!'" (325; ch. 37) Conscience replies: "'No: you shall tear yourself away, none shall help you: you shall yourself pluck out your right eye; yourself cut off your right hand: your heart shall be the victim and you the priest to transfix it'" (325; ch. 37). Jane appears a solitary human being who is both victim and priest. If Jane contains within herself the instruments of her own torture, she also contains within herself the means of her own comfort--and possibly salvation.

Bronte's narratives often appear to lose their sense of forward narrative movement at moments such as this one in Jane Eyre, moments when a character's future appears uncertain, moments when God appears to have forsaken humanity, when human will is either all powerful or terrifyingly weak. Tony Tanner observes, in his introduction to Villette, "Since there seems to be little possibility of true harmonies and balances in the book it is not surprising that the action works by oscillation at many levels" (40). Tanner goes on to explain, "The dominant dramatic expression of these oscillations comes at moments when Lucy has to decide whether 'to go forward and

backward,' advance or retreat" (40). I would add to Tanner's observations that these "oscillations" appear throughout Bronte's work and that they are related to the alternating power and weakness that characters associate with their will in relation to God's will, to the erosion and bolstering of boundaries. Characters are alternately victorious or vanquished; they move forward, exulting in their freedom, and then stop short to resume their chains; they depart from places and then return to them. This "oscillation" represents the desire to stay within God's domain, to leave it and then to run back to it. Bronte's characters thus appear as eternally young children testing the limits of their will. Yet, they grow up. Backward movement in the narrative is not sustained because a reunion with God requires forward movement through time. It is the challenge Bronte faces--to move a woman character towards some point in time. What form of agency can do this?

When in the beginning of Jane Eyre, we meet Jane in the midst of her beginnings, we expect that Jane's experience of time will, in bildungsroman fashion, be marked by her own development. We expect that development to complement, not to undermine, a pilgrimage towards some end. Jane Eyre ends with Jane's marriage to Rochester. More particularly, the novel ends with Jane quoting the words of St. John Rivers, who never loves a woman so as to "eclipse" his love for God, whose measure of his devotion to God is indicated by his

willingness to completely submit his will to God. Jane tells us,

No fear of death will darken St John's last hour: his mind will be unclouded, his heart will be undaunted, his hope will be sure, his faith steadfast. His own words are a pledge of this - 'My Master,' he says, 'has forewarned me. Daily He announces more distinctly, 'Surely I come quickly!' and hourly I more eagerly respond, 'Amen; even so, come, Lord Jesus!' (477; ch. 38)

St. John Rivers speaks the words of St. John at the close of the Bible. These are the words that, as Peter Alan Dale points out, "announce the end of all things temporal....These are the words that predetermine Jane's story just as they close it" (2). Just as the topography in the novel assures Jane of a relationship to God, in this world, as long as she stays within boundaries, time directs Jane towards a life with God in the world to come. Jane Eyre is abundant with markers not only in space, but in time, that are intended to keep Jane directed towards this end. Yet, just as the boundaries in Jane Eyre suggest a human force not easily kept within that design, the ending of the novel, or more particularly, the failure of that ending, points to the defiance of another type of limit.⁹

⁹ In "Action and the Dickens Ending: Bleak House and Great Expectations" John Kucich examines endings in terms of expenditure and release.

As Dale points out, "Christian salvation is clearly the assumed end of these narratives but whether her pilgrims arrive there is another question..." (4) Dale emphasizes that Jane does not arrive there--despite the words from St. John. Rather he insists that Jane's idolatrous nature, which reveals itself in her love for Rochester, prevents any such salvation. In Villette, Miss Marchmont makes a deathbed confession to Lucy Snowe:¹⁰ "'You see I still think of Frank more than of God; and unless it be counted that in thus loving the creature so much, so long, and so exclusively, I have not at least blasphemed the Creator, small is my chance of salvation'" (101; ch. 4). To love the individual rather than God is to dangerously remove God from the worlds Charlotte Bronte presents. Dale writes: "She cannot get round the fear that St. Paul has correctly interpreted our fallen nature, that the desire to love and be loved by the creature is a kind of idolatry that must end in the loss of one's eternal soul" (5).

Dale is convincing. His view adds weight to the view expressed by M.A. Blom in "Jane Eyre: Mind as Law Unto Itself" that Jane "repudiat[es] the basic Christian assertion that the purpose of existence is to train the soul for union with God by submitting one's will to His and surrendering one's attachment to the things of this

¹⁰ Dale makes the important point that this "episode, disassociated as it may be from the main action, is far from inconsequential" (6).

world..." (364). The ending of Jane Eyre does not provide a firm sense of closure. In particular, it does not provide a firm sense of closure on Jane's story. The ending of the novel concerns St John's salvation, not Jane's. However, in not providing an absolute limit on Jane's experience, Bronte suggests possibilities. The ending, it appears, is not sufficient to contain Jane's will, to prevent that will from being a source of action and ultimately a source of change.

Chapter IV: Action and Vision

Bronte's rendering of suffering is crucial to our understanding of how characters discover their ability to act, their agency, in relation to God's. Suffering, in the novels, constitutes an extreme form of dislocation. After Bertha is revealed, Jane understands that she must leave Thornfield. Yet, she has nowhere to go. Once outside the gates that surround the house, she enters the large unboundaried space onto which she has gazed from windows and from leads. This is the space which thus far has appeared inviting yet strangely empty of humanity. Jane appears to have irrevocably departed from one world for another that does not appear to be formed, shaped and peopled. Her predicament at this moment not only reinvokes her orphanhood, but suggests that as an orphan, as one who is utterly alone, she must make a world if she is to occupy one. She is the orphan who as Nina Auerbach points out, "is born to himself and establishes his own social penumbra" (Romantic Imprisonment 57). Yet, at this moment, that process of making and establishing eludes Jane. Jane is lost and she does not know what to do. The two conditions are crucially related. When the coachman leaves her at Whitcross because it is as far as she could pay him to take

her, she laments "What was I to do? Where to go? Oh intolerable questions when I could do nothing and go nowhere!" (350; ch. 28). Jane reminds us at this moment of Caroline Helstone, who feels as lost in the midst of humanity as Jane feels outside of it and who does not know what to do. "[H]alf a century of existence may lie before me. How am I to occupy it?" (190; ch. 10) Caroline asks. But Jane does something which Caroline does not. She demonstrates her faith when her faith appears to be most tested. And the form that this demonstration takes is crucial to what follows. In relation to her own nowhere-ness, Jane invokes God's everywhere-ness. She kneels on the moor, gazes up at the night sky and tells us,

We know that God is everywhere; but certainly we feel His presence most when His works are on the grandest scale spread before us; and it is in the unclouded night-sky, where His worlds wheel their silent course, that we read clearest His infinitude, His omnipotence, His omnipresence. (350-351; ch. 28)

Jane then attempts to render herself as part of the landscape, part of God's vast creation. She sleeps on the moor. She finds comfort there. But the comfort is only temporary.¹ "But next day," she tells us, "Want came to me

¹ In Bearing the Word, Margaret Homans discusses this scene noting the various images of nature invoked by Jane. Homans emphasizes what happens when an idea of motherhood is changed from a vision to a figure of nature.

pale and bare" (351; ch. 28). Want is the desire to live in its most primitive form. Want is something Jane is familiar with; it begins to restore her to herself. Jane announces, in something of her old voice: "Life, however, was yet in my possession, with all its requirements, and pains, and responsibilities. The burden must be carried; the want provided for; the suffering endured; the responsibility fulfilled. I set out" (351; ch. 27).

Jane sets out appearing a little more oriented towards somewhere, although that somewhere has yet to appear. She follows the sound of a church bell and finds herself gazing on a valley, a valley which has not only a church, but pastures, cornfields and a wagon moving slowly on a road--the shapes and forms of a peopled world with God at its center. The scene is notably different from those on which Jane previously gazed from the window at Lowood and from the leads at Thornfield. Those scenes were empty of the humanity which Jane longed to join. Jane has told us that from her vantage point on the leads, "I longed for a power of vision which might overpass that limit; which might reach the busy world, towns, regions full of life I had heard of but never seen" (140; ch. 12). On the moor, gazing over the village, Jane seems to be newly in possession of that power. Jane tells herself, "Human life and human labour were near. I must struggle on: strive to live and bend to toil like the rest" (352; ch. 28).

That night, Jane again attempts to nestle into the moor for comfort. But this time she finds no comfort there. She rouses herself and sees a light in the distance. "This light," she tells us, "was my forlorn hope: I must gain it" (357; ch. 28). Jane begins to move towards the light.² As she gets closer to the source of the light, a vision emerges, first as a silhouette and then as a framed image. "Entering the gate and passing the shrubs, the silhouette of a house rose to view, black, low, and rather long.... In seeking the door, I turned an angle; there shot out the friendly gleam again" (357; ch. 28). The closer Jane gets to the source of the light, the larger, more detailed, more life-like the lighted space becomes. Still, Jane remains outside of the light, as a figure gazing on a picture. She tells us, "This scene was as silent as if all the figures had been shadows and the firelit apartment a picture..." (358; ch. 28). As she gazes, she also begins to listen. The world within that picture takes on more life. The moment that precedes Jane's entry into the scene is fraught with Jane's own separateness from it along with a great sense of anticipation concerning what might be were she to "touch" what she gazes upon.

² In The Poetics of Space, Gaston Bachelard discusses the image of the light in the distant house as an eye that watches. "By means of the light in that far-off house, the house sees, keeps vigil, vigilantly waits" (34).

Till this moment, I had been so intent on watching them, their appearance and conversation had excited in me so keen an interest, I had half forgotten my own wretched position: now it recurred to me. More desolate, more desperate than ever, it seemed from contrast. And how impossible did it appear to touch the inmates of this house with concern on my behalf; to make them believe in the truths of my wants and woes; to induce them to vouchsafe a rest for my wanderings!" (360; ch. 28).

Jane's gazing at this moment crucially anticipates "touching." Bronte prolongs this moment and predicates Jane's survival on the ability of Jane to move forward into what she sees, to penetrate the framed image.³ We think of those moments in Bronte's fiction when characters gaze at images that are dead, when William Crimsworth gazes longingly at the painting of his mother, when Lucy Snowe examines first "Cleopatra" and then, under M. Paul's guidance, "La vie d'une femme." This moment in Jane Eyre is different. Jane gazes on the living. And, it is not so easy, as we know by now, for Jane to simply live. When Jane is initially denied entrance to the house by Hannah, the servant, the one who appears as Mrs. Fairfax did earlier, a

³ In Monsters of Affection: Dickens, Eliot and Bronte on Fatherhood, Dianne E. Sadoff employs a psychoanalytic approach in discussing the crossing of thresholds by male characters in Bronte's novelettes. She presents looking as a form of entry.

guardian of limits and boundaries, Jane again asks the question, "What shall I do?" (361; ch. 28) Finally, St. John Rivers provides her access to Moor House.

The moment when she enters the picture, when she "touches" the inhabitants is a transformative one. Jane is, for the first time in her narrative, profoundly located. As God is everywhere, Jane appears to be somewhere. She testifies to her new sense of belonging, a belonging which renders her a member of living humanity.

Somehow, now that I had once crossed the threshold of this house, and once was brought face to face with its owners, I felt no longer outcast, vagrant, and disowned by the wide world....I began once more to know myself.... (363; ch. 28).

Then Jane behaves in a way that seems curious. Having stated, "I began once more to know myself," she is careful not to let the inhabitants of Moor House know her. She refuses to tell the inhabitants any of her story and presents herself not as Jane Eyre, but as Jane Elliott. Although the scandalous nature of her recent past and the real possibility that Rochester, were he to know her location, would seek her out, suggest a reason for her secrecy, these facts do not explain why Jane then assumes a

state of semi-consciousness for three days and three nights.⁴ During this period of time she can hear and see but not speak or move. Mute and paralyzed, she watches and eavesdrops on those who scrutinize her. St John Rivers, unaware that Jane sees and hears him, offers a number of comments such as "'Rather an unusual physiognomy; certainly not indicative of vulgarity or degradation'" (366; ch. 29) and "'She looks sensible, but not at all handsome'" (366; ch. 29). Finally, he concludes quite authoritatively, "'Ill or well, she would always be plain. The grace and harmony of beauty are quite wanting in those features'" (366; ch. 29). While on one hand Jane's peculiar condition seems to render her defenseless against these remarks, on the other her condition appears to insulate her. While St John Rivers looks at her, his remarks make it apparent that he only sees Jane's outermost self, that he cannot get past her boundaries.⁵

⁴ Janet Gezari's comments concerning the earlier schoolroom scene, when Jane also finds herself displayed, are also helpful here. Gezari writes, "When Jane sees herself being seen and feels her visibility as the burning touch of a hundred concentrated looks, she experiences the negative inversion of what Merleau Ponty calls 'the undividedness of the sensing and the sensed,' the at-oneness of becoming visible for oneself by virtue of the sight of things that is the essence of her own power in the novel" (66).

⁵ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick presents a spatial model of the self which draws attention to the role of boundaries between the self and what is portrayed as outside the self. See The Coherence of Gothic Conventions.

This power which grants Jane the ability to see and then enter Moor House and the similar power in others which Jane then guards herself against might be best understood as "beholding."⁶ "[W]hat I believed in," Jane claims from the leads at Thornfield, "I wished to behold." In Villette, Lucy tells us, "I mentally saw within reach what I had never yet beheld with my bodily eyes; I saw London" (104; ch. 5). The word is associated with religious texts. In the Bible it is most frequently used by God to call attention to His actions and His creation. It appears for the first time in the Bible in Genesis 1:29: "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree...." It appears next in Genesis 1:31 not as a call for attention but as a term which implies affirmation: "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good." "Behold" is also used in the Bible, but far less frequently, to refer to the act of seeing, as in Numbers 23:09: "For from the top of the rocks I see him, from the mountains I behold him...." To behold in the Bible is, most broadly stated, to call for or deliver a form of attention, a form of attention worthy of God's creation.

⁶ In "Looking on at Life: Objectivity and Intimacy in Villette," Janet Freeman writes about Bronte's portrayal of Lucy Snowe's vision, "One makes the world come into being by seeing it with one's own eyes and thus witnessing its objectivity....The open eye taking notice, is the author, the source out of which all things come" (486).

Charlotte Bronte appropriates the term and uses it to refer to a human action--an action which grants humanity tremendous power. To behold in Charlotte Bronte's fiction overcomes limits, collapses boundaries, frees characters from restrictions so that what a character had previously held within him/herself is seen outside the self. It suggests birth,⁷ with an additional step. To behold is for a character to occupy his/her vision, in a way that it had previously occupied him/her. To be beheld, is to be deeply seen.

Bronte's depiction of beholding and being beheld clearly rests on the assumption that vision travels in two directions, that it travels out from the self into the world and from the world into the self, that one has the capacity to not only powerfully see out but be deeply seen in. What is important here is that Bronte provides a way for a woman character to reach out, touch and then enter what she desires just as she might be reached for, touched and entered. When this back and forth movement becomes most intense, the boundaries between self and world become blurred. Beholding and being beheld are thus eroticized in Bronte's writing, perhaps no more so than in Villette when

⁷ In "An Issue of Monstrous Desire: Frankenstein and Obstetrics," Alan Bewell bases a discussion of Frankenstein in an idea espoused in midwifery books that appeared between 1650 and 1800. Bewell points to the theory "that a woman's imagination functioned mimetically: an image placed before her eyes and strongly impressed on her imagination would be reproduced on the body of the child" (109).

Lucy Snowe sees and enters London and London then enters her. When Lucy looks out of her room onto the dome of St. Paul's, she expands inwardly: "While I looked, my inner self moved; my self shook its always-fettering wings half loose; I had a sudden feeling as if I, who had never yet truly lived, were at last about to taste life: in that morning my soul grew as fast as Jonah's gourd" (108; ch. 6). Lucy then enters the dome and from her new vantage point looks down on London. She again enters what she gazes upon:

Descending, I went wandering whither chance might lead, in a still ecstasy of freedom and enjoyment; and I got--I know not how--I got into the heart of city life. I saw and felt London at last: I got into the Strand; I went up Cornhill; I mixed with the life passing along; I dared the perils of crossings. (109; ch. 6)

Lucy is newly vital. "Prodigious," she tells us, "was the amount of life I lived that morning" (109; ch. 6). Life appears quite gloriously in this passage to swell to the proportions of the space Lucy occupies and Lucy appears to swell to receive it. All of this swelling, it must be emphasized, does not preclude God's presence; rather it depends not only on His presence but on His actions. For just as Jonah's gourd in the Bible grows and withers under

God's command,⁸ all that happens in the lives of Bronte's characters is controlled by God. But that control does not appear to eliminate the possibility that humanity might see and enter its vision of the world or that men and women might see and enter each other. The power is allowed humanity because it is partial while God's action is total. In particular it is partial in relation to God's power to see everything and be everywhere.⁹

A problem thus emerges. The desire Jane expresses from the leads at Thornfield, the desire for "a power of vision which might overpass that limit" (140; ch. 12), the desire which is the desire to see and enter a place where one belongs in the world emerges as a power characters, particularly women characters, sometimes fear in themselves as well as in each other. Jane fears fully entering Moor House and she fears being seen and known by its inhabitants. For to defy limits is to threaten the very boundaries which

⁸ "And the Lord God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceedingly glad of the gourd. But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered." Jonah 4: 5-6

⁹ In A Grammar of Motives, Kenneth Burke writes, "Theological notions of creation and re-creation bring us nearest to the concept of total acts" (19). He grants those acts their total status according to the radicalness of the change they bring about. Patricia Mann, in Micro-Politics: Agency in a Postfeminist Era, discusses women's actions as partial in relation to dominant forms of male agency. Burke's and Mann's uses of the terms "total" and "partial" reinforce my interpretation of women's action in Bronte's fiction as always having a relative status.

seem so essential in Bronte's narratives. These boundaries appear to be not easily forsaken, even by those who announce a desire to cross them. Shirley Keeldar, Bronte's most liberated woman character, demonstrates her ambivalence about boundaries when she prevents Caroline Helstone from leaving the place from which they observe the confrontation at Robert Moore's mill:

Miss Keeldar clasped her round the waist with both arms and held her back. 'Not one step shall you stir,' she went on authoritatively. 'At this moment, Moore would be both shocked and embarrassed, if he saw either you or me. Men never want women near them in time of real danger.'

'I would not trouble--I would help him,' was the reply.

'How? By inspiring him with heroism? Pooh! These are not the days of chivalry: it is not a tilt at a tournament we are going to behold, but a struggle about money, food and life.' (333; ch. 19)

Shirley insists that certain forms of action and their accompanying roles for men and women are associated with frivolous games. She suggests that the roles along with the games are extinct. Yet, she grants the boundary that separates men from women a seemingly eternal existence. And although Shirley seems to insist that she and Caroline are relegated to passive watching, to not entering the scene

about "money, food and life," she fervently longs for a role that would allow her to do otherwise. As the confrontation at the mill gains in ferocity, Shirley thinks that "she would have given a farm of her best land for a chance of rendering good service" (337; ch. 19).

We wonder then how Shirley, as well as Bronte's other women characters, can use their powers to behold, how they can enter the struggle about money, food and life, how they can write and have their words read, without benefit of a male intermediary, and still maintain the roles, affirm the boundaries which appear to render them as no more than passive observers.

This question places large demands on the narratives. In response to these demands Bronte appears to splinter the boundaries. Cracks appear. Sometimes the cracks are quite literal. When Shirley Keeldar tells Caroline Helstone that there is no entrance to the mill yard, Caroline tells her otherwise: "'There is a small entrance at the back, besides the gates in front: it opens by a secret method which I know--I will try it.'" (333; ch. 19). In Villette, Lucy Snowe refers to a similar opening when she considers, in her drug-induced state, how she might make her way into the park:

The gates were locked, soldiers set before them; was there, then, no admission to the park?

The other day, in walking past, I had seen, without then attending to the circumstance, a gap in the paling--one stake broken down: I now saw this gap again in recollection--saw it very plainly--the narrow, irregular aperture visible between the stems of the lindens, planted orderly as a colonade. A man could not have made his way through that aperture, nor could a stout woman, perhaps not Madame Beck; but I thought I might: I fancied I should like to try, and once within, at this hour the whole park would be mine--the moonlight, midnight park! (547; ch. 38)

These cracks signal openings in the very boundaries of the self, openings through which the self might find its way beyond boundaries further into the world.

At times, the self appears to work its way out into the world and to then break off forming a double of the original boundaried self, a double that appears to have the capacity to act in ways that the original character cannot, one that appears to have the rather large capacity to alter the course of the narrative.

This phenomenon is most apparent in Bronte's rendering of Bertha in Jane Eyre.¹⁰ When Jane tells Rochester of her sighting of Bertha, a sighting preceded by a series of troubling dreams, it is clear from her very introduction to the account, that Jane knows that what she sees is about to send her story into a swerve:

'All day yesterday I was very busy, and very happy in my ceaseless bustle; for I am not, as you seem to think, troubled by any haunting fears about the new sphere, et cetera: I think it is a glorious thing to have the hope of living with you, because I love you. No sir, don't caress me now--let me talk undisturbed. Yesterday I trusted well in Providence, and believed that events were working together for your good and mine. . . .' (308; ch. 25).

Today, however, is another matter. She tells Rochester, who has returned from a trip, "I beheld you in my imagination so near me I scarcely missed your actual presence" (308; ch. 25) The statement suggests that Jane's imagination has

¹⁰ In "Jane Eyre and the Other Mrs. Rochester: Excess and Restraint in Jane Eyre," Peter Grudin writes, "If, finally, Bertha can be seen as the hyperbolic emblem and ultimate stage of the adulteress' progress, she is most significantly significant in her particular role, that of Jane's secret sharer, substitute self who realizes and suffers for all the dangerous potentials of the protagonist's character" (157). Gilbert and Gubar most famously describe the relationship between Bertha and Jane: "[O]n a figurative and psychological level it seems suspiciously clear that the specter of Bertha is still another--indeed the most threatening--avatar of Jane. What Bertha now does, for instance, is what Jane wants to do" (Madwoman 359).

tremendous power. She then tells Rochester of the onset of a night that has the hallmarks of the Gothic: a wind that blows "with a sullen moaning sound," (309), a night marked by dreams. Following the description of the dreams, Jane tells Rochester of the figure who visits Jane's room. Jane first sees the figure in a way which lends emphasis to the way Jane's vision works; she sees Bertha in a mirror's reflection trying on Jane's wedding veil. Jane tells Rochester, "But presently she took my veil from its place: she held it up, gazed at it long, and then, she threw it over her own head, and turned to the mirror. At the moment I saw the reflection of the visage and features quite distinctly in the oblong glass." Jane simultaneously sees herself and sees another.¹¹ Vision ricochets wildly back and forth. Jane and Bertha behold each other. This beholding is a powerful expression of their mutuality. After describing Bertha's vampirish appearance and how she rends Jane's wedding veil and how Bertha and Jane come to look directly at each other, Jane poses the following question to Rochester: "'Now, sir, tell me who and what that woman was?'" (312; ch. 25). Rochester, in a calculated response, tells Jane that the figure was of her own making: "'[t]he creature of an over-stimulated brain; that is

¹¹ This may be considered as one of the "framed moments" that Mary Ann Caws refers to in Reading Frames in Modern Fiction. "The framed moment," she notes, is frequently 'the other in the same' (6).

certain...'" (312; ch. 25). Jane however insists that "'the thing was real'" (312; ch. 25).

Although we know that Rochester purposely lies and that he attempt to undermine Jane's belief in what she dreams and sees, we recognize a kernel of truth in Rochester's remark. Bertha does indeed seem to be a creature that has Jane as her source. She surfaces in the novel in relation to Jane's increasing expansiveness and becomes increasingly present in synecopation with Jane's movement to the altar to marry Rochester. As Jane's seems to swell--"my thin-crescent destiny seemed to enlarge; the blanks of existence were filled up; my bodily health improved; I gathered flesh and strength" (177; ch. 15)-- Bertha appears to become an increasingly threatening material presence in the novel. And she emerges as the proof of a certain reality, a reality that significantly expands the possibilities for what might happen in the novel, a reality that quite concretely allows the narrative to move with Jane not just up to the wedding altar, but to the wedding altar, back down from it and through a series of events that ultimately culminate in the return to the altar. Bertha's surfacing in the novel as Other, yet as Jane, significantly expands the possibilities for what Jane can do. Rochester attempts to woo Jane out of her reality back into his: "'And these dreams weigh on your spirits now, Jane, when I am close to you? Little nervous subject! Forget visionary woe and think only of real

happiness!'" (309; ch. 25) Yet once Bertha appears to Jane it seems impossible for Jane to disregard her visionary powers in favor of Rochester's version of "real happiness."

Bertha's monstrousness is essential to her role in the novel. It suggests an enormous danger, a complete breaking loose of controls, a disregard for all structure. Such danger, as heightened as it is in Jane Eyre, is more centrally an element in Villette. Cataclysmic changes in the atmosphere are associated with Lucy's extremely circumlocute progress from Polly's companion in Bretton to M. Paul's in Villette. On the night when Miss Marchmont eventually confesses to Lucy of her idol-making love for Frank--"Yet I have my feelings, strong and concentrated; and these feelings had their object" (99; ch. 4), the night when Lucy also realizes that she will be forced out of the two hot close rooms and compelled to live, she appears to be so disturbed that she disturbs, renders violent, the entire globe. She articulates a theory about storms that suggest the storm is part of a world-wide phenomenon that includes epidemic diseases, volcanic eruption and overflowing rivers (98; ch. 4). She tells us: "'Our globe... seems at such periods torn and disordered; the feeble amongst us wither in her distempered breath, rushing hot from steaming volcanoes'" (98; ch. 4). The disorder is wildly contagious. The atmosphere seems to affect Lucy and she seems to affect it. And when Lucy first sees the nun as she cherishes Dr

John's letters in the attic, the nun, like the changes in the atmosphere, seems to be of Lucy's making. The representation of the nun in Villette raises questions which the changes in weather also raise: What are the limits on and the extent of Lucy's power? In Villette, the question becomes, more specifically, who is the source of those powers--Lucy or God?

In response to this question, a struggle emerges. Bronte grants Lucy tremendous power. This is most apparent. However, Lucy is represented as extremely uneasy with her power. She regularly insists that she does not choose to use her power but that she is forced to, that somehow it is wrung from her. Early in the novel when she first goes to work for Miss Marchmont, she tells us: "I know not that I was of a self-reliant or active nature; but self-reliance and exertion were forced upon me by circumstances..." (95; ch. 4). When she does something that suggests "self-reliance and exertion" she often diminishes the action to a degree that becomes suspicious. For instance, she tells us, as she considers her trip to London, "In going to London, I ran less risk and evinced less enterprise than the reader may think....I regarded it as a brief holiday, permitted for once to work-weary faculties, rather than as an adventure of life and death" (105; ch. 5) And when her own powers seem too obviously in play, she invokes the metaphor that is so powerfully introduced in Shirley; whereas Caroline Helstone

describes squeezing a scorpion to check her own feelings, Lucy describes driving nails into her head:

This longing, and all of a similar kind, it was necessary to knock on the head; which I did figuratively, after the manner of Jael to Sisera, diving a nail through their temples. Unlike Sisera, they did not die: they were but transiently stunned, and at intervals would turn on the nail with a rebellious wrench; then did the temple bleed, and the brain thrill to its core. (176; ch. 12)

As much as Lucy tries to deny or even destroy this power, she cannot. And since Lucy is a believer, she tells us that what she has within is in God's control. Chapter XVII begins with Lucy's insistence to "leave that with God:"

These struggles with the natural character, the strong native bent of the heart, may seem futile and fruitless, but in the end they do good. They tend, however slightly, to give the actions, the conduct, that turn which Reason approves, and which Feeling, perhaps, too often opposes: they certainly make a difference in the general tenor of a life, and enable it to be better regulated, more equable, quieter on the surface; and it is on the surface only the common gaze will fall. As to what lies below, leave that with God. Man, your equal, weak as you, and not fit to be your judge, may be shut out thence: take it to your

Maker -- show Him the secrets of the spirit He gave --
ask Him how you are to bear the pains He has
appointed....(252)

Lucy insists that her power emerges from the "the spirit he gave." She maintains that He not she is the very source of her vision and that only He has the privilege of seeing the "secrets of the spirit." Yet "[ma]n, your equal, weak as you" is not so easily shut out from the view which Lucy supposedly tries to hide. We question, in fact, the extent to which Lucy does attempt to conceal herself from fellow humanity. It seems perhaps that Lucy protests too much, that she, in fact, undermines what she tells us she believes.¹²

A number of characters in Villette--Madame Beck, Dr John, M. Paul, Père Silas--appear to look in on what Lucy claims she tries to hide from them. Most prominently hubristic in his gazing is M. Paul, the Catholic, one of two men with whom Lucy falls in love in the novel and the one that the ending of the novel both unites her with and severs her from. Lucy is watched, even beheld, by M. Paul, who unbeknownst to Lucy, gazes on her from his secret vantage point over the enclosed garden of Madame Beck's school, the very symbol of Lucy's closeted, but not entirely hidden,

¹² In "The Buried Letter: Feminism and Romanticism in Villette," Mary Jacobus emphasizes that Lucy's "invisibility is more than evasive; it is devious, duplicitous. Lucy lies to us" (43).

interior. M. Paul is assigned a room overlooking the garden; yet the very window which would grant him a view is boarded. Still, he finds a view. He tells Lucy:

'I watch you and others pretty closely, pretty constantly, nearer and oftener than you or they think. Do you see that window with a light in it?' He pointed to a lattice in one of the college boarding-houses.

'That,' said he, 'is a room I have hired, nominally for a study--virtually for a post of observation.

There I sit and read for hours together: it is my way--my taste. My book is this garden; its contents are human nature. I know you all by heart.' (453; ch. 31)

The same Lucy who gazes covertly at Dr John condemns M. Paul for his secret watching. "'Discoveries made by stealth seem to me dishonourable discoveries'" (453; ch. 31).

Later, she adds to her condemnation, implicating not only M. Paul, but his Catholicism in the "sin" of watching:

"'Monsieur, I tell you every glance you cast from that lattice is a wrong done to the best part of your nature. To study the human heart thus, is to banquet secretly and sacrilegiously on Eve's apples. I wish you were a Protestant.'" (455; ch. 31) Lucy condemns M. Paul for doing what she in fact does, for claiming a God's privilege, for not only watching, but for gazing upon the inner spirit of humanity, while remaining unseen. And M. Paul knows that Lucy, despite her condemnation, shares in his "sin." The

fact that they both see the nun, the fact that both question the specter's origins, suggests a shared power of vision that defies denominational differences. After Lucy all but tells M. Paul of her sightings, he tells her: "I was conscious of rapport between you and myself. You are patient, and I am choleric; you are quiet and pale, and I am tanned and fiery; you are a strict Protestant, and I am a sort of lay Jesuit: but we are alike--there is affinity" (457; ch. 31).

Lucy's disavowal of her ability to behold as well as her desire to be beheld surfaces in the novel in relation to a pull towards the Catholicism that she so assiduously condemns. It is then, not surprising, that when the boundaries of the self appear to be eroded from within and without, when Lucy appears to no longer have the ability to contain herself, when she chooses to not only see but speak, that she directs her spoken revelation at a Catholic priest. She confesses to Père Silas.

As Sally Shuttleworth notes, "[Lucy's] impulse to confession--the voluntary revelation of the secrets of the self--represents for Lucy the nadir of her mental state" (319).¹³ However, the nadir of Lucy's mental state

¹³ Shuttleworth makes this statement within the context of a discussion significantly different from my own. She discusses the ways in which Lucy inscribes institutional practices of surveillance within herself. Her impulse to confess, according to Shuttleworth, represents a relinquishment of power, a giving in to the invasion and inscription of religious authority ("Surveillance..." 318-319).

appears to be both a compulsion to conceal as well as reveal, for even though Lucy confesses, even though the act of confessing ignites another one of Lucy's storms, causes Lucy to collapse and precedes a huge rupture in the narrative, we are never told what Lucy tells. What she confesses to Père Silas is not included in the narrative. It is concealed.

This alternation between revelation and concealment is a powerful force in each of Bronte's novels, yet it is most powerful in Villette. More than any other of Bronte's characters, Lucy appears to struggle against herself. Yet in the midst of this struggle, Lucy appears to behave, as does Jane Eyre when she winds her way to Moor House, with a sense of destination, and with a sense that one must behold and be beheld, not hide, in order to move towards that destination. This is expressed most forcefully early in Villette, when Lucy travels, in what is definitely a forward move, to London. Having arrived, she is momentarily paralyzed. "All at once," she tells us,

my position rose on me like a ghost. Anomalous; desolate, almost blank of hope, it stood. What was I doing here alone in great London? What should I do on the morrow? What prospects had I in life? What friends had I on earth? Whence did I come? Whither should I go? What should I do? (107; ch. 5).

Lucy answers her own questions: "A strong vague persuasion that it was better to go forward than backward and that I could go forward--that a way, however narrow and difficult, would in time open, predominated over other feelings..."

(107; ch. 5). The way requires that Lucy's action, partial and limited as it is in relation to God's, move her forward in space and time, move her forward through life, to a particular place that she belongs.

Chapter V: Human Action in Villette

In Villette, Lucy Snowe, the orphan who is capable of possessing a world within, of seeing that world outside of herself and of having the power to occupy it, finds herself at the end of the novel, unmarried, perhaps unsaved, waiting. To get to that ending, Bronte portrays ways of doing that significantly expand humanity's authority and power, suggesting just how much humanity might do, but not without acknowledging the great limits on human power and not without invoking a sense of loss in acknowledging those limits. To suggest these ways of doing, Bronte relies on framed spaces, which allow the character to act in ways that the narrative does not tolerate outside the frame.¹ These spaces permit Bronte to do no less than alter the relationship between action, identity, narrative and truth.

Vision is crucial to action and narrative in Bronte's fiction. It is also crucial, in a related way, to her fictive representation of identity. In particular, her characters are often identified as spectators or spectacles,

¹ Reading Frames in Modern Fiction by Mary Ann Caws helped me to develop my ideas about the significance of frames in Bronte's work. Caws stresses the idea that the frame is "a technique of limiting with positive aims" (5).

their power to act bound up in that distinction.² Yet, in Villette, more than in the earlier novels, the distinction itself is threatened. Lucy Snowe, whose vigilance is connected to her invisibility, is assigned a role whereby she can see as long as long as she is not seen. She is offered a way out of the shadows in which she confines herself, a way to see and be seen, a way to have her vision be a source of change in the world.³

This possibility is presented early in the novel in the figure of Madame Beck. Madame Beck is distinguished in the novel as a woman who possesses power associated with vision. She does what Lucy does--she watches unseen--yet, unlike Lucy, she owns the spaces in which she spies on others, and her surveillance suggests a power over those whom she watches within those spaces, a power which Madame Beck believes is necessary if not desirable.⁴ Lucy admires Madame Beck's exercise of this power:

Very good sense she often showed; very sound opinions she often broached: she seemed to know that keeping

² This distinction and its collapse is more fully explored in Joseph Litvak's Caught in the Act: Theatricality in the Nineteenth Century English Novel.

³ In "Is the gaze male?" E. Ann Kaplan writes, "To begin with, men do not simply look; their gaze carries with it the power of action and of possession which is lacking in the female gaze. Women receive and return a gaze, but cannot act upon it" (31). Kaplan's idea is central to gaze theory. I suggest an added perspective.

⁴ Michel Foucault's ideas about surveillance are influential here.

girls in distrustful restraint, in blind ignorance, and under a surveillance that left them no moment and no corner for retirement, was not the best way to make them grow up honest and modest women; but she averred that ruinous consequences would ensue if any other method were tried with continental children....she was sick she would declare, of the means she had to use, but use them she must; and after discoursing, often with dignity and delicacy to me, she would move away on her 'souliers de silence,' and glide ghost-like through the house watching and spying everywhere, peering through every key-hole, listening behind every door.

(135-136; ch. 8)

Madame Beck offers Lucy a space in which Lucy herself might act in a way that will allow Lucy to possess some of the power Madame Beck possesses without removing Lucy from Madame Beck's gaze. Madame Beck makes the offer first as a measure of Lucy's increasing power in the text and second as an indicator that the power makes forward movement in the narrative possible. "'Dîtes donc,'" says Madame Beck, "'vous sentez vous réellement trop faible?'" (140; ch. 8). And then "'Will you,' said she, 'go backward or forward?' indicating with her hand, first, the small door of communication with the dwelling-house, and then the great double portals of the classes or schoolrooms" (141; ch. 8). Before Lucy gives her response--"'En avant'" (141; ch. 8),

she considers her response in regard to not only the power and opportunity for forward movement that Madame Beck offers her, but the power that Madame Beck herself assumes:

I might have said 'Yes,' and gone back to nursery obscurity, and there, perhaps, mouldered for the rest of my life; but, looking up at madame, I saw in her countenance a something that made me think twice ere I decided. At that instant, she did not wear a woman's aspect, but rather a man's. Power of a particular kind strongly limned itself in all her traits, and that power was not my kind of power: neither sympathy, nor congeniality, nor submission, were the emotions it awakened. I stood--not soothed, nor won, nor overwhelmed. It seemed as if a challenge of strength between opposing gifts was given, and I suddenly felt all the dishonour of my diffidence--all the pusillanimity of my slackness to aspire. (141; ch. 8)

Madame Beck, as a woman who wears a man's aspect, presents to Lucy tremendous possibilities, a form of power that is radically different from any that Lucy has encountered previously. There are reminders here of the possibilities suggested in the ambiguous figure of Yorke Hunsden in The Professor. And the fact that Madame Beck speaks to Lucy and that Lucy responds to her in French is significant. As Patricia Yaeger so perceptively comments, the second language,

enact[s] a moment in which the novel's primary language is put into process, a moment of possible transformation when the writer forces her speech to break out of old representations of the feminine and to posit something new. (12)

Madame Beck presents to Lucy what Marjorie Garber in her writing about transvestism refers to as a third possibility.

"The 'third,'" writes Garber,

is that which questions binary thinking and introduces crisis....[T]he third is not a term. Much less is it a sex, certainly not an instantiated "blurred" sex as signified by a term like "androgyny" or "hermaphrodite".... The "third" is a mode of articulation, a way of describing a space of possibility. (11)

In saying "en avant," in accepting Madame Beck's invitation, in entering the classroom, Lucy enters a framed space which offers possibilities for Lucy to act in ways that are different from the ways she has behaved in the novel up to this point. And she does act differently. She becomes a tyrant, ripping up one student's paper and locking another student in a closet. Her behavior, for all its extremity, is a parody of that difference. It draws attention to the contrast and to an idea that shocks Lucy--that there is a reality to human behavior that is obscured by roles. "I shall never forget," Lucy tells us, "that first lesson, nor

all the under-current of life and character it opened up to me. Then first did I begin rightly to see the wide difference that lies between the novelist's and poet's ideal 'jeune fille,' and the said 'jeune fille' as she really is" (142; ch. 8).

This is an extremely provocative idea for Bronte to have Lucy articulate. It invites the reader to be suspect of the parts and roles that Bronte herself assigns. It invites us to consider not only the "jeune fille" but Lucy herself as she "really is."⁵ It invites us to consider that there is a truth to the self that lies beyond the roles novelist assign, that lies not in who characters supposedly are, but in what they do.⁶

The recognition of this idea, a recognition which reflects on Lucy's understanding of herself, is frustrated by an impediment to Lucy's expression of herself. In the classroom, Lucy cannot fully speak. The language spoken in the classroom is Madame Beck's language--French. English speaking Lucy tells us, "Could I but have spoken in my own tongue, I felt as if I might have gained a hearing for, in the first place, though I knew I looked a poor creature, and

⁵ In "The Reflecting Reader in *Villette*," Brenda Silver emphasizes that Lucy "projects her readers into the landscape of the novel...and asks them to use their imaginations in a mutual act of creation which in turn validates her own emerging self" (90).

⁶ Patricia Mann stresses reasons for increased emphasis in contemporary philosophical theory on agency rather than identity.

in many respects actually was so, yet nature had given me a voice that could make itself heard, if lifted in excitement or deepened my emotion" (143; ch. 8).

There is a moral imperative at work in Villette to represent the real, to represent, for instance, "the jeune fille as she really is." And in this imperative is the possibility that characters would be freed from confining spheres and frames which are tombs. In Villette, more than in the earlier works, this imperative is expressed as a need for women characters to speak. While the urgency is quite pronounced, the obstacles are considerable. There is, most prominently, the biblical prohibition against women's speech. In Shirley, Joe Scott recites the prohibition, "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man; but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve'" (322; ch. 18). However, Bronte quite effectively, pushes that obstacle out of the way. When Joe Scott asks Caroline, "'And what is your reading, Miss Helstone, o' these words o' St Paul's?'" (323; ch. 18), Caroline responds:

'Hem! I--I account for them in this way: he wrote that chapter for a particular congregation of Christians, under peculiar circumstances; and besides, I dare say, if I could read the original Greek, I should find that many of the words have been wrongly translated, perhaps misapprehended altogether. It

would be possible, I doubt not, with a little ingenuity, to give the passage quite a contrary turn; to make it say, "Let the woman speak out whenever she sees fit to make an objection;"-- "it is permitted to a woman to teach and to exercise authority as much as may be. Man, meantime, cannot do better than hold his peace," and so on.' (323; ch. 18)

Caroline's words further open the door for women to speak. Yet, they do not always do so. Another obstacle, one that is perhaps less explicitly articulated but more powerful, remains. For a woman character to speak is for that character to reveal what has previously been a hidden truth. "[T]ruth," Janet Freeman tells us in her discussion of speech in Jane Eyre "is known more in its telling than itself; the only way to know the truth...is to be able to say it or hear it said" (697). In Bronte's work, truth poses a danger to the narrative. Truth threatens to undermine the very structure on which the narrative rests. One truth is that the spheres and frames have no reality in and of themselves. Like the knights' adventures to which Erich Auerbach refers, the confining spheres and tomb-like frames are tied, and Caroline Helstone's comments on scripture are a reminder of this, to a particular set of circumstances. Outside of those circumstances, they either lose their meaning or they become absolutes.

In Villette we see that a truth does not necessarily have to be revealed and known to have an impact on the narrative. Lucy would have us believe, on one hand, that what happens in the classroom does not fundamentally affect who she is or how she behaves, that a truth not spoken is not really a truth at all and that she can comfortably return to her position in the shadows where she can watch unseen. However, there are developments. Lucy enters into two highly charged relationships. She begins to see her invisibility, as challenged by the presence of Ginevra Fanshawe, a character who is quite literally the most spectacular character in Villette, and she begins to express her affection for Dr. John who admires Ginevra. "In the birth of desire," Rene Girard reminds us, "the third person is always present" (21). What is at the heart of this triangle is Lucy's desire, not to disappear, not to remain silent and invisible, but to possess the ability to be seen that Ginevra possesses and also to see in a way that suggests the possession of another--a power that is associated with Dr. John. These developments give the narrative a fragmented quality. Yet it is important at this point to see a basis, a source for the seemingly disparate strains.⁷ And these disparate events appear to coalesce

⁷ It is important to heed Mary Jacobus' advice: "Instead of correcting the novel into a false coherence, we should see in its ruptured and ambiguous discourse the source of its uncanny power" (54).

around Lucy, around what Lucy does in the narrative as well as around what she cannot do if she continues to hide. Increasingly Bronte represents the opposition between what Lucy can and cannot do in terms of darkness and light, the darkness associated with the allee defendue, the most sequestered part of the garden at Madame Beck's school, the lightness associated with the city beyond the garden and the school. The dissonance between the allee defendue and the city gains in force in the novel. One night Lucy tells us of

sitting on the hidden seat reclaimed from fungi and mould, listening to what seemed the far-off sounds of the city. Far-off, in truth, they were not: this school was in the city's centre; hence, it was but five minutes' walk to the park, scarce ten--to buildings of palatial splendour. Quite near were wide streets brightly lit, teeming at this moment with life: carriages were rolling through them, to balls or to the opera. The same hour which tolled curfew for our convent, which extinguished each lamp, and dropped the curtain round each couch, rung for the gay city about us the summons to festal enjoyment. (175; ch. 12)

Quite characteristically, Lucy attaches an unbelievable disclaimer: "Of this contrast I thought not..." (175; ch. 12). Lucy then attempts to further enclose herself not only in the space of the garden, but in the dimension of time.

We think of Ebenezer Scrooge who wanders through time to arrive at a point where he claims, "I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me" (Stave 4; 151). Unlike Ebenezer, Lucy claims that her present and future will die within her. "About the present," she tells us, "it was better to be stoical: about the future--such a future as mine--to be dead. And in catalepsy and a dead trance, I studiously held the quick of my nature" (175; ch. 2).

This is a crucial moment in the novel. Again we witness a pull between the forward movement of the narrative and a stasis that Lucy refers to early in the novel when she mentions the eight years spent "as a bark slumbering through halcyon weather, in a harbour still as glass--the steersman stretched on the little deck, his face up to heaven, his eyes closed: buried if you will in a long prayer" (94; ch. 4)

Bronte again resists stasis. The narrative does advance, but not in a smooth, linear manner. Rather, it erupts. The storm signals a change in the conditions for action, relieving the tension in the narrative, allowing Lucy to go forward into life, rather than backward towards death. Lucy tells us of her response to the storm: "As for me, the tempest took hold of me with tyranny: I was roughly roused and obliged to live" (176; ch. 12). Lucy then breaks out of the spaces that contain her:

I got up and dressed myself, and creeping outside the casement close by my bed, sat on its ledge, with my feet on the roof of a lower adjoining building. It was wet, it was wild, it was pitch-dark. Within the dormitory they gathered round the night-lamp in consternation, praying loud. I could not go in: too restless was the delight of staying with the wild hour, black and full of thunder, pealing out such an ode as language never delivered to man--too terribly glorious, the spectacle of clouds, split and pierced by white and blinding bolts. (176; ch. 12)

Lucy's darkness is splintered by light and her silence is quite violently interrupted by the sound of thunder. Thus Bronte begins to render the collapse between the allee defendue and the world outside its gates, between what Lucy can do and cannot do. Positioning in the novel becomes increasingly significant. Whether Lucy is situated in darkness or light, whether her position renders her visible or invisible indicates Lucy's relationship to power. Most profoundly, her positioning indicates whether what happens in the novel finds its source in the character or outside the character. Lucy's positioning indicates whether Lucy herself is an agent of events or whether agency is outside of her. In Villette, to step out into an arena where one sees and is seen is to undermine one central idea, that power is outside the human self.

This is a profound idea, yet not a new one within the scope of Bronte's work. Bronte has suggested this in the earlier novels, generally with some ambivalence. It is left up to us to decide who or what it is that shows Jane the path away from St John Rivers and back to Rochester. What is telling in this scene is Jane's turning away from St John. We witness Jane turning away from St John and turning towards something else:

'I can do what he wants me to do: I am forced to see and acknowledge that,' I meditated--'that is, if life be spared me. But I feel mine is not the existence to be long protracted under an Indian sun. What then? He does not care for that: when my time came to die, he would resign me, in all serenity and sanctity to God who gave me' (429; ch. 34)

Jane, who worries about not being strong enough to survive in India, gains some form of strength from her decision to not submit herself to St John who in turn would submit her to God. Jane does not ask for liberty for herself as she does earlier in the novel nor does she enter into negotiations concerning her future. She simply refuses to die, even if that death assures her of salvation. She chooses to live.

Jane's decision reveals her power. When, after refusing St John she returns to Thornfield, she does not simply witness its ruin. She appears to make the house into

a ruin by gazing upon it. Just as she Jane's sighting of Moor House appears to bring what is inside Jane into the world so that she might touch it and enter it, her sighting of Thornfield appears to burn it to the ground. She describes, in some detail, her gaze: "A peep, and then a long stare; and then a departure from my niche and a straying out into the meadow; a sudden full stop in front of the great mansion, and a protracted, hardy gaze towards it" (449; ch. 36). Lines later, after describing a lover who gazes upon his lover only to realize that she is dead, Jane tells us what she sees: "I looked with timorous joy towards a stately house; I saw a blackened ruin" (449; ch. 36).

In Villette, even more provocatively and more dangerously than in the Jane Eyre, Bronte displays the power of a woman character. What, we might ask, is more dangerous and provocative, than choosing love over duty, than claiming that one's powers are one's own, than destroying the past by looking at it? What is more dangerous and more provocative than all of the above is a woman claiming that she has a future that is not entirely in God's control.

In Villette, even more powerfully than in Jane Eyre, the future begins to appear as a possibility to Lucy. Storms signal that possibility. The legacy of the storm is a longing in Lucy, a longing "for something to fetch me out of my present existence and lead me upwards and onwards" (176; ch. 12). Lucy tells us that she squelches that

longing, yet the longing is expressed in the novel. That "something to fetch me out of my present existence" appears in the form of another framed space, this one a literal stage in a theater where Lucy might "act." The word reverberates with meanings here suggesting that Lucy might do what she is forced to do in the novel, take on a part, behave in a way that does not reflect the reality of who she really is or that she might do what she does in the classroom, act in a way that suggests another reality, one that has yet to be wholly recognized in the novel. She is forced to display her power, to "act" by M. Paul who announces "You must take a part" (202; ch. 14).

Where before Lucy's part in the novel was singular, confining, Lucy sheds that part for something that is multiple, that suggests a movement towards that third space of possibility. Once Lucy takes the stage, she does not simply assume the role assigned her, she modifies the conditions for action, creating possibilities, multiplicities where before there was something monolithic, singular, confining. Lucy brings to her playing of the role a place in the Ginevra--Lucy--Dr. John triangle that it would be all but impossible for Lucy to assume as one who is only man or only woman, only spectator only spectacle. The frame itself no longer seems a tomb and her performance furthers the collapse between all that has been so rigorously separated in the novels. Lucy joins Ginevra on

the illuminated stage, so that she shares the gaze that is directed at Ginevra, so that Lucy too might become spectacular; yet, when she realizes that Ginevra is acting at someone, Lucy follows the line of Ginevra's attention, what she refers to as Ginevra's "shafts" (210; ch. 14), to find Ginevra the subject of Dr. John's gaze. Lucy then appropriates Dr. John's gaze--"There was language in Dr John's look, though I cannot tell what he said; it animated me: I threw it into my wooing of Ginevra" (210; ch. 14). The power that Lucy exercises in seeing and being is fueled by Lucy's being able to speak. She tells us,

That first speech was the difficulty; it revealed to me this fact, that it was not the crowd I feared, so much as my own voice. Foreigners and strangers, the crowd were nothing to me. Nor did I think of them. When my tongue once got free, and my voice took its true pitch, and found its natural tone, I found nothing but the personage I represented--and of M. Paul, who was listening, watching, prompting in the side-scenes.
(ch. 14; 209-210)

While there is much in Bronte's fiction that raises questions about who or what is the source of what happens, speaking in Bronte's fiction clearly emanates from humanity and is associated with something "true" and "natural." It has been established that Bronte goes to a great deal of trouble to keep what is true and natural out of the main

narrative. What has not yet been discussed is the power that builds based on that restraint. John Kucich directs our attention to this. "If forms of reserve do dominate the novels," writes Kucich, "it is only because such reserve has been elaborately adapted to Bronte's framework of desire, with its double movement towards self-concentration and self-disruption" ("Passionate Reserve and Reserved Passion" 78). What has not been fully explored is the degree to which this reserve or restraint bestows power on that which we read, but which no character in the novel hears. Those are the words which are silently addressed to us. Among those words are those which at first glance may appear as innocuous, passing comments on a character's reaction to events in the novel. They include Jane Eyre's response to her first encounter with Rochester: "My help had been needed and claimed: I had given it: I was pleased to have done something; trivial, transitory though the deed was, it was yet an active thing, and I was weary of an existence all passive" (147; ch. 12). These words gain strength from ones that follow, that are also delivered silently, but which read to us like speeches. These words include Jane's address to us from the leads: "Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties and a field for their efforts...." (ch. 12; 141). Later, when Caroline Helstone and Shirley Keeldar find a listener in each other, ideas

that were silently delivered in Jane Eyre, are spoken. Shirley tells Caroline, "'If men could see us as we really are, they would be a little amazed; but the cleverest, the acutest men are often under an illusion about women: they do not read them in a true light..." (343; ch. 20). It is tempting to say that there is a progression in Bronte's work leading to a greater license for women to speak, to speak in such a way that allows for women to be seen in a "true light." However, this is not the case. Lucy Snowe is not as outspoken as Shirley Keeldar or even, one may argue, as Caroline Helstone. And the retrenchment from speaking directs our attention to the fragility of the narrative, the degree to which the narrative depends on certain things not being spoken.

Villette maps out territory that will be more fully explored by other writers. We can look ahead from Villette to novels in which characters discuss quite openly what it is that can be said and not said, reminding us of just how much the novel can tolerate and not tolerate. We look ahead, for example, to The Golden Bowl in which Henry James writes about seeing and not seeing, telling and not telling. The crack in the bowl is a rather apparent sign of the novel's fragility; James alerts us to a certain ominousness associated with this fragility by looking back from his own time to a novel one rarely thinks of in association with his own:

He remembered to have read, as a boy, a wonderful tale by Allan Poe...the story of the shipwrecked Gordon Pym, who, drifting in a small boat further toward the North Pole--or was it the South?--than anyone had ever done, found at a given moment before him a thickness of white air that was like a dazzling curtain of light, concealing as darkness conceals, yet of the colour of milk or of snow. There were moments when he felt his own boat move upon some such mystery. The state of mind of his new friends, including Mrs. Assingham herself, had resemblances to a great white curtain. He had never known curtains but as purple even to blackness--but as producing where they hung a darkness intended and ominous. When they were so disposed as to shelter surprises the surprises were apt to be shocks.

(42; Book First; chap 1)

James goes on to move from this discussion of shocks to a discussion of the absolute value associated with the figure of the Prince in The Golden Bowl. The Prince himself is aware of the value with which he is endowed. And he is aware also that the value is a vestige which has become an absolute.

It was as if he had been some old embossed coin, of a purity of gold no longer used, stamped with glorious arms, medieval, wonderful, of which the 'worth' in mere modern change, sovereigns and half-crowns, would be

great enough, but as to which, since there were finer ways of using it, such taking to pieces was superfluous. (43; ch. 1)

The Golden Bowl is, as we know, a sort of test of that worth and a test of the novel's ability to sustain it. That James directs our attention back to Poe who directs our attention to the very nature of lightness and darkness is of importance. Villette, the last of Bronte's work, is a landmark in this terrain in which the novel becomes that by which we decide what we can tolerate to question and not question, what we can look at and what we must turn away from and what we can say and cannot say. Villette is about what we must do and cannot do to live.

Lucy's performance admits possibilities into the narrative and gives those possibilities moral value. In particular, it admits one large possibility--that a woman's performance can be a force for change. This is sufficiently dangerous to cause Lucy to retrench: "But I had acted enough for one evening; it was time I retired into myself and my ordinary life" (211; ch. 14). Lucy retires into herself during the long vacation at Madame Beck's school. During that vacation, Lucy attempts to relinquish the power she had felt on stage. She does what Jane does on the moor, she tries to die. While Jane nestles into the moor, Lucy takes herself out of the triangle she has shared with Ginevra and Dr John. She completely relinquishes the power

she has felt in relation to them on stage, the power to see and be seen, the power to be possessed and to possess.

The despair that Lucy feels at this point is not accompanied by a testimony of faith. Rather, it is accompanied by a stark testimony to the absence of faith. "When I tried to pray, I could only utter these words: 'From my youth up Thy terrors have I suffered with a troubled mind.'

Most true was it." (232: ch. 15)

Lucy's experience on stage and her suffering following that experience suggest the great gain as well as the loss in allowing truth a place in the story, truth which undermines the authority of God and the comfort, security and order that accompany that authority when it remains unquestioned. Lucy's suffering forces the question: Who or what is the source of power?

The question is raised quite dramatically at the end of Volume I. Protestant Lucy who denounces the Catholicism that surrounds her at Madame Beck's school takes herself, in the midst of her despair, to a confessional in a Catholic Church. There is much in the novel, particularly in the very structure of the novel, to suggest that what Lucy confesses, which is not written in the novel, is radically dislocating. Lucy leaves the church and "pitch[es] headlong down an abyss" (236; ch. 15). Thus Volume I ends. Lucy awakens at the beginning of Volume II in Bretton. In almost

science fiction type style she finds herself surrounded by scenes from her past. "Where was I," she asks.

'Not only in what spot of the world, but in what year of our Lord? For all these objects were of past days, and of a distant country. Ten years ago I bade them good-by; since my fourteenth year they and I had never met. I gasped audibly, 'Where am I?' (239; ch. 16)

Lucy is lost in both time and space. Speaking the truth, the truth that is located in her changes everything. She is no longer recognizable to herself, nor is her own history familiar to her. We are reminded of Jane Eyre who, upon returning to her room after the interrupted wedding, asks the question, "[W]here was the Jane Eyre of yesterday?" (323; ch. 26). The movement in Volume II is towards a place where Lucy belongs. This is a larger burden in Villette than it is in Jane Eyre because Lucy's dislocation, disorientation and power appear intrinsic to Lucy, part of her condition. She does not appear to be simply a pawn in someone else's game, a moveable piece in the story, a sought-for princess waiting to be claimed, a woman waiting to be reunited with God. To locate Lucy is the challenge Bronte faces.

To move Lucy towards a location and to move the narrative forward, Bronte orchestrates a battle between that which supports Lucy's expression of her power and that suppresses it. After Dr. John tells Lucy that he will write

her, Lucy can barely contain her hope that he will actually do so. The hope provokes a crisis. Bronte then again personifies a character's thinking. In this case, a part of Lucy's thinking, that part which Bronte labels "Reason," breaks off from Lucy and becomes a force outside of her. A conversation ensues between Lucy and Reason. Reason warns Lucy against the consideration of two possibilities. The first possibility is that Dr. John will actually write. The second is that Lucy might actually respond in writing. Lucy addresses Reason:

'[W]here the bodily presence is weak and the speech contemptible, surely there cannot be error in making written language the medium of better utterance than faltering lips can achieve?'

Reason only answered, 'At your peril you cherish that idea, or suffer its influence to animate any writing of yours!'

'But if I feel, may I never express?'

'Never!' declared Reason. (307; ch. 21)

Lucy resists Reason's intimidation. "We shall and must break bounds at intervals, despite the terrible revenge that awaits our return" (308; ch. 21).

Volume II of Villette is marked by Lucy's breaking of bounds. However, she does not entirely vanquish Reason. Rather, Reason remains an adversarial force that increasingly appears less a personification and more an

actual figure. It is not surprising that Reason, which Lucy refers to as "vindictive as a devil" and "envenomed as a stepmother" (308; ch. 21) eventually appears to Lucy--as she reads the letter that she indeed receives from Dr. John--in the figure of "the nun."

What does it mean that Reason develops from a personified abstract into a ghost--a ghost that is revealed to be humanly constructed? It reveals that Reason is reason, that it is not absolute, that it is humanly made and as such it can also be unmade. But there is something else. The fact that the ghost is a nun establishes a connection between Reason and different figures in the novel. Those figures include the nun who, according to legend, was buried for "some sin against her vow" (172; ch. 12) and Justine Marie, who wears a nun's dress in the portrait that Lucy sees during her visit to Madame Walravens. The figure of the nun also establishes a connection between Lucy and three men in the novel. Lucy first sees the ghostly nun when she is reading a letter from Dr. John. It is then Dr. John that provides a scientific diagnosis of the experience: "'I think it is a case of spectral illusion: I fear, following on and resulting from long-continued mental conflict'" (330; ch. 22). The nun, by virtue of her Catholicism, suggests a connection between Lucy and the Catholic Priest, Père Silas, to whom she confesses. Finally, the ghostly nun, for its resemblance to Justine Marie, establishes a connection

between Lucy and M. Paul, who loved Justine Marie and who has also seen the ghostly nun. The extent to which Bronte invites us to see an idea take on different forms show us the evolution of an idea from an absolute into something which can only be understood within a context marked by change.

Just as Shirley Keeldar articulates the idea that one's conscience changes in relation to circumstances, Lucy shows us how an idea becomes not simply a figure but different figures in a story. Increasingly our attention is drawn to the process by which this happens, no more prominently than when Lucy performs as a writer for two "dandy professors of the college--Messieurs Boissec and Rochemorte--a pair of cold-blooded fops and pedants, sceptics, and scoffers" (493; ch. 35). They question whether Lucy is the true author of one of her essays. Believing her incapable of having produced the essay, they interrogate her asking her questions about "various'ologies" (493; ch. 35) to which Lucy responds "'Je n'en sais rien'" (493; ch. 35). Finally, Lucy proves herself to be the author that they doubt she is. She proves herself not by responding to the questions they pose, but by writing. In particular, she creates a figure out of an idea. Having been told to write on the theme of "Human Justice," Lucy tells us,

An idea once seized, I fell to work. 'Human Justice' rushed before me in novel guise, a red, random beldame

with arms akimbo. I saw in her house, the den of confusion: servants called to her for orders or help which she did not give; beggars stood at the door waiting and starving unnoticed; a swarm of children, sick and quarrelsome, crawled round her feet and yelled in her ears appeals for notice, sympathy, cure, redress. The honest woman cared for none of these. She had a warm seat of her own by the fire, she had her own solace in a short black pipe, and a bottle of Mrs Sweeney's soothing syrup; she smoked and she sipped and she enjoyed her paradise.... (495-496; ch. 35)

We are reminded in this passage of the curates, manufacturers and landed gentry we meet in the early chapters of Shirley. In particular, we are reminded of the emphasis Bronte places on the failure of these men to respond to real suffering. We can imagine Messieurs Boissec and Rochemorte in their midst. And as we watch Lucy prove herself to be the author of her work, we think of Frances Henri, whose writing is seized by William Crimsworth. Lucy Snowe creates a figure who mocks what is real for Lucy: that Lucy is a writer, that she gives form to ideas, that the forms change in relation to circumstances. We wonder, however, why the figure she creates is a woman, not a man.

It is one thing to have a woman as the main character in a novel. It is another for that character to demonstrate

her ability to create human figures that are representations of ideas in the novel. And it is another to have those ideas take on forms that suggest a connection between the idea and oneself. As Lucy writes, she mocks Human Justice, and suggest that she is not immune from the mockery. She makes herself both author and subject. She portrays the real and claims herself a part of it.

We are reminded again of Dickens' Esther Summerson. When Esther realizes that she is the ghost who haunts Chesney Wold, that the footsteps she hears on the pavement are hers, the entire perspective of the novel changes. Most profoundly, it changes in Esther's own eyes. At that moment of recognition, Esther sees her own life as a tremendous source of power. She realizes that it is not she who is haunted, but she who haunts.⁸ Just as power seems suddenly to emanate from Esther when it is revealed that events in the novel find their source in her birth, Lucy's writing reveals Lucy's agency. Most importantly, Lucy reveals her agency to herself.

Bronte's insistence on posing Reason against Lucy's breaking of bounds frustrates us. We wait for Lucy to prevail. In particular we wait for Lucy's thinking to become truth, the truth. This does not happen. Rather, the nun

⁸ In "The Spectralization of the Other," Terry Castle examines the "explained supernatural" in The Mysteries of Udolpho. Her comments add to my understanding of Esther's realization that she is the one who haunts Chesney Wold.

draws more attention to the dissonance in the novel, to the distinctions between inside and outside, spectator and spectacle, light and darkness. These distinctions begin to coalesce around one question: Who or what is the source of the nun? Lucy puts it this way: "I was left secretly and sadly to wonder, in my own mind, whether that strange thing was of this world, or of a realm beyond the grave; or whether indeed it was only the child of malady, and I of that malady the prey" (333; ch. 22).

The question forces the narrative towards not simply an answer, but the means by which Lucy might arrive at an answer. Bronte introduces another framed space, the theater in which Lucy and Dr John see Vashti. The performance is accompanied by a tremendous sense of possibility:

Deeply did I feel myself privileged in having a place before that stage; I longed to see a being whose powers I had heard reports which made me conceive peculiar anticipations. I wondered if she would justify her renown: with strange curiosity, with feelings severe and austere, yet of riveted interest, I waited. (338; ch. 23)

Indeed, much depends on what Lucy is about to see. And what she sees amazes her:

I had seen acting before, but never anything like this: never anything astonished Hope and hushed Desire; which outstripped Impulse and paled Conception; which,

instead of merely irritating imagination with the thought of what might be done, at the same time fevering the nerves because it was not done, disclosed power like a deep, swollen, winter river, thundering in cataract, and bearing the soul, like a leaf, on the steep and steely sweep of its descent. (341; ch. 23)

Seeing Vashti changes Lucy. Quite directly and powerfully, Lucy sees in Vashti's power, her own.⁹ And when she turns to look at Dr. John, the power, which previously she had attributed to him, is gone. Lucy realizes that Dr. John does and cannot see what Lucy sees, that he lacks a certain power of vision and therefore lacks an ability to recognize it in others.

Dr John could think, and think well, but he was rather a man of action than of thought; he could feel, and feel vividly in his way, but his heart had no chord for enthusiasm: to bright, soft, sweet influences his eyes and lips gave bright, soft, sweet welcome... for what belonged to storm, what was wild and intense, dangerous, sudden and flaming, he had no sympathy, and held with it no communion. When I took time and regained inclination to glance at him, it amused and

⁹ In Tragic Muse: Rachel of the Comedie-Francaise, Rachel M. Brownstein reminds us that Vashti dies "excruciatingly" at each night's performance. "Lucy" writes Brownstein, "must ward her off: the baseless rumor of fire is a bitter, dismissive last image of the passionate woman..." (229). Lucy is thus alternately drawn and repelled by Vashti as so many of Bronte's characters are to women in frames.

enlightened me to discover that he was watching that sinister and sovereign Vashti, not with wonder, nor worship, nor yet dismay, but simply with intense curiosity. (341; ch. 23)

The theater seems to catch fire and the narrative heads into a swerve. Dr. John stops writing Lucy; Lucy buries the letters she had previously received from him. Seeing Vashti and burying her feelings for Dr. John frees Lucy. Towards the end of the novel, Lucy attempts to leave behind the darkness with which she has enclosed herself. Having been given a drug by Madame Beck to sedate her, Lucy operates under its influence to do what she has for pages and pages been wanting to do, to leave the confines of the school, to enter not only light but sound. She does--urgently, passionately. The school that she flees never seems quite so sepulchral nor the outside world quite so beckoning as when Lucy makes her escape:

Ghostly deep as is the stillness of this convent, it is only eleven. While my ear follows to silence the hum of the last stroke, I catch faintly from the built-out capital, a sound like bells or like a band --a sound where sweetness, where victory, where mourning blend. Oh, to approach this music nearer, to listen to it alone by the rushy basin! Let me go --oh, let me go! What hinders, what does not aid freedom? (548; ch. 38)

Lucy is exultant upon her escape and plunges into all that from which she has held herself apart: "Light broke, movement gathered, chimes pealed - to what was I coming?" (549; ch. 38). Lucy enters the city that is illuminated in the darkness. Yet, Lucy does not tolerate such light for long. She heads for the park where she again take her place among the shadows and secretly watches.

Lucy believes in what she sees and in what she thinks based on what she sees. "Let us be honest," Lucy tells us, "and cut heretofore, from the homely web of truth" (563; ch. 39). The "truth" that Lucy arrives at in the park is that M. Paul, whom she loves, is engaged to marry another.¹⁰ Having seen what she believes is the truth, Lucy returns to the school and attacks the nun:

Warm from illuminations, and music, and thronging
thousands, thoroughly lashed up by a new scourge, I
defied spectra. In a moment without exclamation, I had
rushed on the haunted couch; nothing leaped out, or
sprang, or stirred; all the movement was mine, so was
all the life, the reality, the substance, the force; as

¹⁰ Of this scene, Gillian Beer writes, "The apparent vantage point offered by silence and inaction, the refusal to partake, or to foster and extend her social identity, misleads Lucy Snowe more rancorously than any role-playing. Her determination to be audience to a play has led her into falsehood, not truth." (185). Beer places emphasis on the opposition between spectator and spectacle. She does not interpret the scene in relation to Lucy's escape from Madame Beck's school or her subsequent attack on the nun.

my instinct felt. I tore her up--the incubus! I held her on high--the goblin! I shook her loose--the mystery! And down she fell--down all round me--down in shreds and fragments--and I trode upon her. (569; ch. 39)

Lucy retrenches to the place of darkness and silence, only to attack that part of herself which confines her there. Never does Lucy seem so vital. Yet, there is something that serves to undermine Lucy's considerable power at this moment. Lucy's attack on the nun is fueled by her experience in the park. Lucy believes in what she has seen there. Yet, Lucy is wrong. What she thinks is the truth is her own mistaken interpretation of a scene. M. Paul is not engaged to another. Rather, he is in love with Lucy.

M. Paul tells Lucy what she must "do" at the end of the novel.

'[Y]ou shall live here and have a school; you shall employ yourself while I am away; you shall think of me sometimes; you shall mind your health and happiness for my sake, and when I come back -'

There he left a blank. (587; ch. 41)

The "blank" which M. Paul directs Lucy towards is that third space of possibility, one that does not provide closure. Bronte goes so far as to not so subtly mock her readers' expectations of closure:

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. (596; ch. 40)

In writing these words, Charlotte Bronte directs our attention to what the ending is not. The ending is not the marriage that ends each of the previous novels. Rather the ending undermines the idea that there is an absolute end. The ending admits an unknown future.

It is tempting to see the fact that Lucy does not end the novel married as setting her far apart from Frances Henri, Jane Eyre, Caroline Helstone and Shirley Keeldar. Yet, as has been established, the earlier endings do not provide a firm sense of closure. Frances Henri is not content to be William Crimsworth's wife. She wants to be his wife and a headmistress of a school. The marriage at the end of Jane Eyre does not, as Peter Alan Dale has emphasized, signal Jane's salvation. The double marriage at the end of Shirley provides a marker in time, time which marches on into a more industrialized world. Each ending gives us a sense of another story leaking around the edges. We are gratified to see that some of what we read at the end of each novel provides the foundation for the novel to

follow. And we see in these endings and beginnings the weakening of certain structures which require women in novels to fit into Vladimir Propp's spheres and God's plan. As these structures lose strength, the narrative increasingly occupies the cusp of two worlds. We witness women characters struggling to maintain the type of being that the old world required of them while undertaking the doing that the new world will require.

In Villette there is a tilt towards one side of that cusp. In Villette, a woman character steps, more frequently, into light. There is a more prominent place for her words in the story. Unfortunately, Charlotte Bronte did not have the opportunity to complete a novel that builds on the achievement of Villette. We do, however, have a fragment of what might have been. In the last months of her life, Bronte started a novel which she first named Willie Ellin and then changed to Emma (Lane viii). In those titles, there is a reminder of Shirley Keeldar, a manly woman bearing a man's name and of Lucy Snowe who, being forced to perform in M. Paul's play, chooses to maintain her woman's clothes beneath the accessories which indicate that she plays the part of a man. There is multiplicity where before there was something singular and unchangeable.

What is most striking about the beginning of Emma is the positioning of the narrator. The narrator stands, not before a mirror, as Bronte's characters often do, and not

before other characters for their perusal. Rather, the character stands before us. "First," the narrator says to the reader, "you must scan me if you please. We shall go on better together after a satisfactory introduction and due apprehension of identity" (243; ch. 1). Thus, we witness the narrator placing herself squarely in our gaze. She has less to gain, we guess, from concealing herself as Lucy Snowe does. This, however, is not certain. For though she places herself in the world to see, she is only at one place at one time. She is partial and imperfect in relation to God who is whole and perfect. There is, in the beginning of Emma, a tremendously poignant feeling of both loss and gain.

Bibliography

- Alcott, Linda and Elizabeth Potter, eds. Feminist Epistemologies. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Allott, Miriam, ed. The Brontes: The Critical Heritage. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974.
- Aquinas, St. Thomas. An Aquinas Reader. New York: Fordham UP, 1972.
- Aristotle. The Nicomachean Ethics. Trans. David Ross. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1925.
- Armstrong, Nancy. Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel. New York: Oxford UP, 1987.
- Auerbach, Eric. "The Knight Sets Forth." Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature. Trans. Willard R. Task. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1953. 123-142.
- Auerbach, Nina. "Alluring Vacancies in the Victorian Character." The Kenyon Review 8 (1986): 36-48.
- . Romantic Imprisonment: Women and Other Glorified Outcasts. New York: Columbia UP, 1985.
- . Woman and the Demon: The Life of a Victorian Myth. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1982.
- Austen, Jane. Pride and Prejudice. 1813. New York: Penguin, 1972.
- Austin, J. L. How to Do Things with Words. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1962.
- Bachelard, Gaston. The Poetics of Space. Trans. Maria Jolas. 1958. Boston: Beacon, 1969.
- Bacon, Alan. "Jane Eyre's Paintings and Milton's Paradise Lost." Notes and Queries 31 (1984): 64-65.
- Barfield, Owen. Saving the Appearances: A Study in Idolatry. New York: Harbinger-Harcourt, 1965.
- Barthes, Roland. The Pleasures of the Text. Trans. Richard Miller. New York: Hill and Wang, 1975.

- Basch, Françoise. Relative Creatures: Victorian Women in Society and the Novel. New York: Schocken, 1974.
- Beauvoir, Simone de. The Second Sex. Trans. and Ed. H. M. Parshley. 1953. New York: Vintage, 1974.
- Beer, Gillian. "'Coming Wonders': uses of theatre in the Victorian novel" English Drama: Forms and Development. Ed. Marie Axton and Raymond Williams. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1977. 164-185.
- Benjamin, Jessica. The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism and the Problem of Domination. New York: Pantheon, 1988.
- Berg, Terma F. "From Pamela to Jane Gray: Or, How Not to Become the Heroine of Your Own Text." Studies in the Novel 17 (1985): 115-137.
- Bersani, Leo. A Future for Astyanax: Character and Desire in Literature. Boston: Little, 1969.
- Bewell, Alan. "An Issue of Monstrous Desire: Frankenstein and Obstetrics." Yale Journal of Criticism 2 (1988): 105-128.
- The Bible
- Blake, Kathleen. "Review of Bronte Studies, 1975-1980." Dickens Studies Annual: Essays on Victorian Fiction. Ed. Michael Timko, Fred Kaplan and Edward Guiliano. Vol. 10. New York: AMS, 1982. 221-240.
- . "Review of Bronte Studies, 1981-87." Dickens Studies Annual: Essays on Victorian Fiction. Ed. Michael Timko, Fred Kaplan and Edward Guiliano. Vol. 18. New York: AMS, 1989. 381-401.
- Blom, M. A. "Jane Eyre: Mind as Law Unto Itself." Criticism 15 (1973): 350-364.
- Bonaparte, Felicia. The Gypsy-Bachelor of Manchester: The Life of Mrs. Gaskell's Demon. Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1992.
- Boone, Joseph Allan. Tradition Counter Tradition: Love and the Form of Fiction. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1987.
- Brandt, Richard and Jaegwon Kim. "Wants as Explanations of Actions." The Journal of Philosophy 60 (1963): 425-435.

- Bronte, Anne. Agnes Grey. 1847. London: Dent, 1985.
- . The Tenant of Wildfell Hall. 1848. New York: Penguin, 1972.
- Bronte, Charlotte. An Edition of The Early Writings of Charlotte Bronte. Ed. Christine Alexander. 2 vols. Basil Blackwell: 1987, 1991.
- . "Farewell to Angria." Jane Eyre. Ed. Richard Dunn. New York: Norton, 1971. 438.
- . Jane Eyre. 1847. New York: Penguin, 1984.
- . The Professor and Emma, A Fragment. 1857 and 1860. London: Dent, 1969.
- . Shirley. 1849. New York: Penguin, 1974.
- . Villette. 1853. New York: Penguin, 1979.
- Bronte, Emily. Wuthering Heights. 1847. New York: Bantam, 1974.
- Brown, Lyn Mikel, and Carol Gilligan. Meeting at the Crossroads: Women's Psychology and Girl's Development. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1992.
- Brownstein, Rachel M. Becoming a Heroine: Reading about Women in Novels. New York: Penguin, 1982.
- . "Representing the Self: Arnold and Bronte on Rachel." Browning Institute Studies: An Annual of Victorian Literary and Cultural History. Ed. Adrienne Auslander Munich. Vol. 13. New York: The Browning Institute, Inc. and the Graduate School and University Center, City University of New York, 1985. 1-24.
- . Tragic Muse: Rachel of the Comédie-Francaise. New York: Knopf, 1993.
- Burke, Kenneth. A Grammar of Motives. Berkeley: U of California P, 1969.
- Carlyle, Thomas. "Characteristics." 1831. Critical and Miscellaneous Essays. Vol. 3. New York; AMS, 1969. 5 vols. 1-43.

- Castle, Terry. "The Spectralization of the Other in The Mysteries of Udolpho." The New Eighteenth Century: Theory, Politics, English Literature. Ed. Felicity Nussbaum and Laura Brown. New York: Methuen, 1987. 231-253.
- Chase, Karen. Eros and Psyche: The Representation of Personality in Charlotte Bronte, Charles Dickens and George Eliot. New York: Methuen, 1984.
- Cixious, Helene. "Sorties." New French Feminisms: An Anthology. Ed. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron. Amherst: The University of Massachusetts P, 1980. 90-98.
- Colby, Robert A. "Villette and the Life of the Mind." PMLA 75 (1960): 410-419.
- Collins, Christopher. The Poetics of the Mind's Eye: Literature and the Psychology of Imagination. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1991.
- Crosby, Cristina. "Charlotte Bronte's Haunted Text." Studies in English Literature 24 (1984): 701-715.
- Dale, Peter Alan. "Heretical Narration: Charlotte Bronte's Search for Endlessness." Religion and Literature 16 (1984): 1-24.
- Davidson, Donald. Essays on Actions and Events. Oxford: Clarendon, 1980.
- Deming, Barbara. "Two Perspectives on Women's Struggle." Liberation 17 (June 1973): 30-37.
- Dickens, Charles. Bleak House. 1853. New York: Bantam, 1983.
- . A Christmas Carol: The Public Reading Version. New York: New York Public Library, 1971.
- . Hard Times: For These Times. 1854. New York: Signet-NAL, 1980.
- Eagleton, Terry. "Class, Power and Charlotte Bronte." Critical Quarterly 14 (1972): 225-235.
- . Literary Theory: An Introduction. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1983.
- Eliade, Mircea. The Myth of the Eternal Return. Trans. Willard R. Trask. New York: Pantheon, 1954.

- Eliot, George. Adam Bede. 1859. New York: Penguin, 1980.
- . Daniel Deronda. 1876. New York: Penguin, 1979.
- . Middlemarch. 1872. New York: Signet, 1964.
- . The Mill on the Floss. 1860. New York: Signet, 1981.
- Ewbank, Inga-Stina. Their Proper Sphere: A Study of the Bronte Sisters as Early-Victorian Female Novelists. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1966.
- Felman, Shoshana. The Literary Speech Act: Don Juan with J. L. Austin, or Seduction in Two Languages. Trans. Catherine Porter. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1983.
- Foucault, Michel. The Foucault Reader. Ed. Paul Rabinow. New York: Pantheon, 1984.
- . The History of Sexuality: Volume I: An Introduction. Trans. Robert Hurley. 1978. New York: Vintage-Random, 1980.
- Freeman, Janet H. "Looking on a Life: Objectivity and Intimacy in Villette." Philological Quarterly 67 (1988): 481-512.
- . "Speech and Silence in Jane Eyre." Studies in English Literature 24 (1984): 683-700.
- Garber, Marjorie. Vested Interests: Cross Dressing and Cultural Anxiety. New York: Harper Perennial-Harper Collins, 1992.
- Garner, Shirley Nelson, Claire Kahane and Madelon Sprengnether. The (M)other Tongue: Essays in Feminist Psychoanalytic Interpretation. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985.
- Gaskell, Elizabeth. A Dark Night's Work and Other Stories. New York: Oxford UP, 1992.
- . Four Short Stories. London: Pandora, 1983.
- . The Life of Charlotte Bronte. 1857. New York: Penguin, 1975.
- . Sylvia's Lovers. New York, Dutton, 1964.
- Gates, Barbara Timm. Critical Essays on Charlotte Bronte. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1990

- Gerin, Winifred. Charlotte Bronte: The Evolution of Genius. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1967.
- Gezari, Janet. Charlotte Bronte and Defensive Conduct: The Author and Body at Risk. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1992.
- Gilbert, Sandra M. and Susan Gubar. The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and The Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination. New Haven: Yale UP, 1984.
- Girard, Rene. Deceit, Desire and the Novel. Trans. Yvonne Freccero. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins P, 1965.
- Goodman, Felicitas D. "Visions." The Encyclopedia of Religion. 1987.
- Grudin, Peter. "Jane and the Other Mrs. Rochester: Excess and Restraint in Jane Eyre." Novel 10 (1977): 145-57.
- Haight, Gordon, ed. The Portable Victorian Reader. New York, Penguin, 1972.
- Hampshire, Stuart. Thought and Action. 1959. Notre Dame: U of Indiana P, 1982.
- Haraway, Donna J. Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature. New York: Routledge, 1991.
- Harding, Sandra. The Science Question in Feminism. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1986.
- Hardy, Thomas. Tess of the D'Urbervilles: A Pure Woman. 1891. New York: Penguin, 1978.
- Hawthorne, Nathaniel. The Scarlet Letter. 1850. New York: Bantam, 1986.
- Heilbrun, Carolyn G. Toward a Recognition of Androgyny. New York: Norton, 1973.
- Hirsch, Marianne. "Mothers and Daughters." Signs 7 (1981): 200-222.
- Homans, Margaret. Bearing the Word: Language and Female Experience in Nineteenth Century Women's Writing. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1986.
- Houghton, Walter E. The Victorian Frame of Mind 1830-1870. New Haven: Yale UP, 1957.

- Jacobus, Mary. "The Buried Letter: Feminism and Romanticism in Villette." Women Writing and Writing about Women. Ed. Mary Jacobus. New York: Barnes, 1979.
- James, Henry. The Golden Bowl. 1904. New York, Penguin: 1966.
- Johnson, E. D. H. "'Daring the Dread Glance:' Charlotte Bronte's Treatment of the Supernatural in Villette." Nineteenth Century Fiction 20 (1966): 325-336.
- Joyce, James. A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. 1916. New York: Vintage International-Random, 1993.
- . Ulysses. New York: Modern Library-Random, 1934.
- Kaplan, E. Ann. Women and Film: Both Sides of the Camera. New York: Methuen, 1983.
- Keefe, Robert. Charlotte Bronte's World of Death. Austin: U of Texas P, 1979.
- Kermode, Frank. The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction. New York: Oxford UP, 1967.
- , "Sensing Endings." Nineteenth Century Fiction. 33 (1971): 144-158.
- Kucich, John. "Action in the Dickens Ending: Bleak House and Great Expectations." Nineteenth Century Fiction. 33 (1971): 88-109.
- . "Passionate Reserve and Reserved Passion in the Works of Charlotte Bronte." Critical Essays on Charlotte Bronte. Ed. Barbara Timm Gates. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1990. 68-88.
- . Repression in Victorian Fiction: Charlotte Bronte, George Eliot, and Charles Dickens. Berkeley: U of California P, 1987.
- Lacan, Jacques. Ecrits: A Selection. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Norton, 1977.
- Lane, Margaret. Introduction. The Professor and Emma. By Charlotte Bronte. London: Dent, 1969.
- Langbauer, Laurie. Women and Romance: The Consolations of Gender in the English Novel. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1990.

- Lawrence, Karen. "The Cypher: Disclosure and Reticence in Villette." Critical Essays on Charlotte Bronte. Ed. Barbara Timm Gates. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1990. 306-319.
- Litvak, Joseph. Caught in the Act: Theatricality in the Nineteenth Century English Novel. Berkeley: U of California P, 1992.
- MacIntyre, Alasdair. After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory. Notre Dame: U of Notre Dame P, 1981.
- Mann, Patricia S. Micro-Politics: Agency in a Postfeminist Era. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1994.
- Maynard, John. Charlotte Bronte and Sexuality. New York: Cambridge UP, 1984.
- Meslin, Michel. "Eye." The Encyclopedia of Religion. 1987.
- Michie, Helena. The Flesh Made Word: Female Figures and Women's Bodies. New York: Oxford UP, 1987.
- Miller, D.A. Narrative and Its Discontents. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1981.
- . The Novel and the Police. Berkeley: U of California P, 1988.
- Miller, J. Hillis. The Disappearance of God: Five Nineteenth Century Writers. Cambridge: Belknap-Harvard UP, 1963.
- . Fiction and Repetition: Seven English Novels. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1982.
- Miller, Nancy. "Emphasis Added: Plots and Plausibility in Women's Fiction" PMLA 96 (1981) 36-48.
- Moglen, Helen. Charlotte Bronte: The Self Conceived. New York: Norton, 1976.
- Moi, Toril. Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory. New York: Methuen, 1985.
- Monahan, Melodie. "Heading Out is Not Going Home: Jane Eyre." Studies in English Literature 28 (1988): 589-608.
- Morrison, Toni. Beloved: a novel. New York: Plume, 1987.

- Mulvey, Laura. Visual and Other Pleasures. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1989.
- Munch, Richard. Theory of Action: Towards a New Synthesis Going Beyond Parsons. New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987.
- O'Shaughnessy, Brian. "Observation and the Will." The Journal of Philosophy. 60 (1963): 367-392.
- Parker, Patricia. Inescapable Romance: Studies in the Poetics of a Mode. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1970.
- Peters, Margot. Unquiet Soul: A Biography of Charlotte Bronte. London: Futura, 1975.
- Prest, John. "Gardens." The Encyclopedia of Religion. 1987.
- Propp, Vladimir. Morphology of the Folktale. Austin: U of Texas P, 1968
- Qualls, Barry V. The Secular Pilgrims of Fiction: The novel as book of life. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1982.
- Rich, Adrienne. "Jane Eyre: The Temptations of a Motherless Woman." On Lies, Secrets, and Silence: Selected Prose 1966-1978. New York: Norton, 1979. 89-106.
- . "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Revision." On Lies, Secrets, and Silence: Selected Prose 1966-1978. New York: Norton, 1979. 33-49.
- Richter, David H. The Critical Tradition: Classic Texts and Contemporary Trends. New York: St. Martin's, 1989.
- Rigby, Elizabeth. "An Anti-Christian Composition." Jane Eyre. Ed. Richard Dunn. New York: Norton, 1971. 449-453.
- Rodolff, Rebecca. "From the Ending of The Professor to the Conception of Jane Eyre." Philological Quarterly 61 (1982): 71-89.
- Rowe, Karen E. "'Fairy-born and human-bred': Jane Eyre's Education in Romance." The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development. Ed. Elizabeth Abel, Marianne Hirsch and Elizabeth Langland. Hanover: UP of New England, 1983. 69-89.

- Sacks, Oliver. Seeing Voices: A Journey into the World of the Deaf. Berkeley, U of California P, 1989.
- Sadoff, Diane F. Monsters of Affection: Dickens, Eliot and Bronte on Fatherhood. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1982.
- Said, Edward. Beginnings: Intention and Method. New York: Columbia UP, 1985.
- Scarry, Elaine. The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World. New York: Oxford University P, 1985.
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. "The Character in the Veil: Imagery of the Surface in the Gothic Novel." PMLA 96 (1981): 255-70.
- . The Coherence of Gothic Conventions. New York: Arno P, 1980.
- Shorter, Clement. The Brontes: Life and Letters. 1908. 2 vols. New York: Haskell, 1969.
- Shuttleworth, Sally. George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Science. New York: Cambridge UP, 1984.
- . "The Surveillance of a Sleepless Eye": The Constitution of Neurosis in Villette." One Culture: Essays in Science and Literature. Ed. George Levine. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1987. 313-335.
- Silver, Brenda. "The Reflecting Reader in Villette." The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development. Ed. Elizabeth Abel, Marianne Hirsch and Elizabeth Langland. Hanover: UP of New England, 1983. 90-111.
- Silverman, Kaja. The Subject of Semiotics. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1983.
- Soelle, Dorothee, Suffering. Trans. Everett R. Kalin. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism" Critical Inquiry 12 (1985): 243-261.
- Stewart, Stanley. The Enclosed Garden: The Tradition and the Image in Seventeenth Century Poetry. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1966.
- Stone, Robert. A Flag for Sunrise. New York: Vintage International-Random, 1992.

- "Susanna." The Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha.
Revised Standard Version. Cambridge: Oxford UP, 1965.
- Tanner, Tony. Introduction. Villette. By Charlotte
Bronte. 1853. New York: Penguin, 1979. 7-51.
- Taylor, Irene. Holy Ghosts: The Male Muses of Emily and
Charlotte Bronte. New York: Columbia UP, 1990.
- Thompson, E. P. The Making of the English Working Class.
New York: Vintage-Random, 1966.
- Tillich, Paul. A History of Christian Thought: From Its
Judaic and Hellenistic Origins to Existentialism. Ed.
Carl E. Braaten. Touchstone-Simon and Schuster, 1967.
- Vargish, Thomas. The Providential Aesthetic in Victorian
Fiction. Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1985.
- Watt, Ian. The Victorian Novel: Modern Essays in
Criticism. New York: Oxford UP, 1971.
- Weitz, Morris. "Literature and Philosophy: Sense or
Nonsense." Literary Criticism and Philosophy. Ed.
Joseph P. Strelka. Yearbook of Comparative Criticism.
Vol. X. University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1983.
3-40.
- Welch, Claude. Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth
Century. Vol. 1. New Haven: Yale UP, 1972. 2 vols.
- Williams, Raymond. The English Novel from Dickens to
Lawrence. London: Hogarth, 1984.
- Winnifrith, Tom. The Brontes and Their Background: Romance
and Reality. London: MacMillan, 1973.
- Wise, Thomas James and John Alexander Symington. 4 vols.
The Brontes: Their Lives, Friendships and
Correspondence. Oxford: Shakespeare Head P, 1932.
- Wright, Elizabeth, Ed. Feminism and Psychoanalysis: A
Critical Dictionary. Cambridge: Basil Blackwell,
1992.
- Yaeger, Patricia S. "Honey-Mad Women: Charlotte Bronte's
Bilingual Heroines." Browning Institute Studies. Ed.
Adrienne Auslander Munich. Vol. 14. New York: The
Browning Institute, Inc. and the Graduate School and
University Center of the City University of New York,
1986. 11-36.