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Imagination and Intuition in the Narrative of Charlotte Brontë

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Imagination and Intuition in the Narrative

of Charlotte Brontë

(TITLE)

BY

Norma Henning

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
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IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
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Thesis Abstract

In this paper, I will examine the four novels of Charlotte Brontë: The Professor, Jane Eyre Shirley and Villette. I will examine the reason/passion conflict within the characters of William Crimsworth, Jane Eyre, Caroline Helstone and Lucy Snowe. I will show that there exists a basic duality within each of these characters: the pull of duty and the desire to escape into passion and the imagination. Jane Eyre and Lucy Snowe resolve the conflict by recognizing the divided nature of their souls and emerge as complete and whole individuals. William Crimsworth and Caroline Helstone refuse to acknowledge the passion within their souls and remain divided and incomplete. When Brontë listened to her intuitive inner voice, she created the wonderful imaginative characters of Jane Eyre and Lucy Snowe; however, when she fought against her inner voice, her plain and unemotional professor and the cacophony of voices which form Shirley appeared.

In her childhood, Brontë wrote imaginary stories, poems and plays about the created kingdoms of Angria and Glasstown. Critics have long believed that this childhood experience served as an apprenticeship for her adult work. My thesis will show that Brontë,

paradoxically, spent the rest of her life trying to rid her work and life of the effects of this apprenticeship.

In her lonely years as a teacher at Roe Head School, Brontë was sustained by her secret Angrian dreamworld. Her only escape from the frustration of teaching the apathetic students of Roe Head was in dreaming of the imaginative writings she created in her childhood. However, Brontë, as a devout Protestant, began to feel guilty about her obsession. Her Protestant background taught her that this imaginary world was sinful and immoral. Later in her adult life, she was criticized for the imaginary and passionate nature of her work. Throughout her life and work, she attempted to resolve this conflict within herself and within the heroines and heroes she created.

In 1839, at the age of twenty-three, she stated her resolution to abandon the imaginative world of Angria in an untitled fragment known as "Farewell to Angria." The Professor is Brontë's attempt to present characters in predominantly moral terms. I will show that this resolution led her to create William Crimsworth, her plain and unemotional professor. He is presented as a pure, guiltless individual surrounded by

a world of evil.

Brontë relinquished her vow to abandon the imagination and created Jane Eyre, a heroine who trusts in imagination, intuition, and vision. Jane fights the battle within her soul. She wins the battle because she listens to her intuitive inner voice that tells her what she wants to hear: she must return to Rochester. Jane realizes that if she does not listen to her inner voice, a life of emotional imprisonment with St. John will be the result.

Even with the success of Jane Eyre, Brontë was still criticized for her supposed excesses of the imagination. In her next novel, Shirley, she abandoned the central consciousness of her I-narrator and presented the story from an androgynous omniscient point of view. Through the examination of the character of Caroline Helstone, I will show that the reason/passion conflict is not a major theme of this novel. There is no central consciousness or inner voice with which the reader can empathize. Brontë presents so many issues, such as social reform, economic instability, and spinsterhood, that the voices become loud and strident and confuse the reader. The

noise becomes deafening and, if there is a reason/passion conflict, it becomes lost in the babble.

Brontë recognized that she could not write about social issues in the traditional Victorian manner or in a manner which would take advantage of her talent: a talent which reached its high point with the creation of Lucy Snowe in Villette. I will show that Lucy is a creature of feeling. She is not concerned about the actual facts of a situation but her own emotional reactions to the situation. Does it cause pain, joy, suffering, guilt or fear? Lucy's answer comes from her intuitive consciousness: the inner voice.

I support the view presented by Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar in The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination, that Brontë was, in essence, a trance writer who created two heroines, Jane Eyre and Lucy Snowe, who mirrored her own soul: a soul that was continually in conflict. Her narratives illustrate her struggle to resolve this conflict by unifying the dual natures of her characters.

I will approach the passion/reason conflict within Brontë's characters from a psychosexual point of view. I will show that Brontë presents two heroines, Jane

Eyre and Lucy Snowe, who have immersed themselves in the unconscious, and, in so doing, have rediscovered their souls. They have re-established contact with the spiritual nature of their inner beings. Jane and Lucy discover that reason and rationality are inadequate substitutes for a unity of spirit. Brontë struggled to present characters who recognize that the complete personality answers to both voices: passion and reason. The divided personality listens to only one voice and remains incomplete. This study will also support the view of Charles Burkhardt, who relates all of Brontë's work to the "unconscious" nature of her writing, suggesting that her adult work was dependent on an unconscious substratum evident in her own Angrian writings.

In addition, I believe that a revisionist biographical reading has a substantial impact on the psychosexual examination of Brontë's characters. It is impossible to deny that Brontë's background and creative routine influenced her ability to create characters who were able to recognize and validate their own spiritual natures.

Charlotte Brontë completed four major novels during her short life: The Professor, 1846, Jane Eyre, 1847, Shirley, 1849 and Villette, 1852. In these novels, Brontë's aesthetic process led her to fight the battle between the "mighty opposites" (Burkhart 23) of passion and reason. The major scope of Brontë's novels is the relationship between reason and passion within her major characters. For Brontë, herself, the battle was never won. Her narratives do not determine the fundamental value of reason over passion or passion over reason. Her novels are vital and alive because she never herself determined the answer.

For all literary artists, and Brontë is no exception, self-definition precedes self-assertion (Gilbert 17). This self-definition for Brontë, however, was difficult to achieve. She quite clearly illustrated her belief in reason when she stated: "Novelists should never allow themselves to weary of the study of real life" (qtd. Martin 57). Then, she stated:

"If they observed this duty conscientiously, they would give us fewer pictures chequered with vivid contrasts of light and shade; they would seldom elevate their heroes and heroines to the heights of rapture--still

seldomer sink them to the depths of despair;
for if we rarely taste the fulness of joy in
this life, we yet more rarely savour the
acrid bitterness of hopeless anguish."

(qtd Martin 57)

Quite clearly, if Brontë had followed her own advice,
she would not have written Jane Eyre or Villette.
These statements, however, illustrate the divided
nature of the Victorian mind.

Brontë was a product of the Romantic Age. She was
delighted by the novels of Sir Walter Scott and the
poetry of Lord Byron. Her nature drew her to romance
and passion and colored her imagination when she
created the exciting lives of the men and women of the
Glasstown Confederacy. Brontë struggled to live in the
strict morality of Victorian society by escaping into
that part of her soul that was the most satisfying: the
imaginative world of Angria. The desire to escape,
however, became evidence in her eyes of her innately
wicked and sinful nature.

Brontë was a creature of feeling who yearned to
express her self-identity in the Romantic motifs of
passion and love. Masao Miyashi in his book The
Divided Self: A Perspective on the Literature of the

Victorians writes that Brontë lived in a time of great fear of Romantic indeterminacy and responded with what is called the "Victorian conversion" which, defining a moral view of art as of life, tries to put the divided self together and make it work (107). Imagination and passion must be tempered by the rational and reasonable (Miyashi 107). Brontë might very well have yearned to release the passion in her soul. However, if she did so, she felt it must be diluted by reasonable explanations.

Brontë's own search for self-unification led to conflict within her characters. William Crimsworth and Caroline Helstone fail in their struggle for unification and remain divided. However, Jane Eyre and Lucy Snowe fight the battle vigorously and are successful in reconciling passion and reason into a viable way of living.

From the age of thirteen, Brontë wrote imaginary stories, poems and plays about the created kingdoms of Angria and Glasstown. The Brontë children even performed many of their imaginative writings. Within the sibling circle, there was a glimmering of the struggle between passion and reason that would dominate

much of Brontë's later work. Charlotte and Branwell preferred exotic locations, romance and supernatural forces while Emily, in contrast, preferred the characters to be down-to-earth, solid and reasonable.

It is generally accepted in Brontë scholarship that Charlotte's juvenilia provided an apprenticeship for her later work (Alexander 54). However, what has not been commonly understood is that, paradoxically, she spent much of her life struggling to free herself from this apprenticeship.

In her Angrian writings, Brontë created an elaborate world of aristocratic intrigue based on the rival factions of her favorite characters: the Duke of Wellington and Alexander Percy. Branwell directed the wars, debates, and business affairs while Charlotte supervised the household dramas.

In her lonely years as a teacher at Roe Head School, Brontë was sustained by her secret Angrian dreamworld. Her only escape from the frustration of teaching the apathetic students of Roe Head School was in dreaming of the imaginative writings she created in her childhood. Angria had become a secret substitute for reality. However, Brontë, as a devout Protestant, began to feel guilty about her obsession. Her Protestant background, reinforced by her letters from

her devout friend, Ellen Nussey, told her that this imaginative world was violent and sinful (Alexander 56). But Bronte's conscience waged a losing battle:

Never shall I, Charlotte Brontë, forget (she concludes) what a voice of wild and wailing music now came thrillingly to my mind's, almost my body's ear, nor how distinctly I, sitting in the schoolroom at Roe Head, saw the Duke of Zamorna leaning against that obelisk....I was quite gone. I had really, utterly, forgot where I was and all the gloom and cheerlessness of my situation. I felt myself breathing quick and short as I beheld the Duke lifting up his sable crest, which undulated as the plume of a hearse waves to the wind, and knew that music which sprang as mournfully triumphant as the scriptural verse,

O Grave, where is thy sting? O Death where is thy victory?
was exciting him and quickening his ever-rapid pulse. "Miss Bronte, what are you thinking about?" said a voice that dissipated all the charm.

(qtd. in Ratchford

111-12)

Brontë's letters to Ellen Nussey began a long period of suffering in which Brontë tried to satisfy both the pragmatic necessity of teaching at Roe Head and her own conscience by suppressing the obsessive urgings of her imagination. She began to feel that teaching was a drudgery and a duty which prevented her from writing, her only joy. During the Christmas holidays of 1836, in an attempt to obtain a professional writer's evaluation of her work, she sent a sample of her poetry to Robert Southey. Southey's response which came two months later, poisoned her dreams that she might someday make money writing:

"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 as an accomplishment and a recreation. To these duties you have not yet been called, and when you are, you will be less eager for celebrity."

(qtd. Ewbank 5)

Southey's advice was extremely upsetting as it reinforced Brontë's own misgivings about her writing.

Readers are thankful that Brontë ignored Southey's advice and refused to give up writing; however, from this time on, she made a conscious and consistent effort to weaken the hold of Angria on her imagination. Both Branwell and Charlotte referred to their Angrian creation as the "infernal world" and the "world below" (Blom 22). The settings for her stories became more realistic, the landscape became England instead of Africa and, in late 1839, at the age of twenty-three, she made a definite resolution to relinquish her imaginative world of childhood. She stated this resolution in an untitled writing known as "Farewell to Angria" (Alexander 51). In this fragment, she recorded that she viewed her Angrian world as an artist who had exhausted her model and who is ready to paint "from the life" (Alexander 57).

"Farewell to Angria" marks the end of an era in her writing and it is a clear statement of her intention to free herself and her characters from the imagination and to use reason and rationality as a substitute. Thus, Brontë embarked on her difficult journey toward self-unification, wholeness and an acceptance of the complementary voices of realism and passion.

When Brontë began to write for publication, she

attempted to resolve the conflict by a moral commitment to what she called a "plain and homely" realism (Christ 62). She intended to hold imagination on a tight rein, but even so this commitment was ambivalent. Her intention was based on a denial of self-identity and the sacrifice of a part of her very being; therefore, she was not entirely successful. In the Preface to The Professor, she explained the commitment to realism that she had determined would control the novel:

"I said to myself that my hero should work his way through life as I had seen real living men work theirs--that he should never get a shilling he had not earned--that no sudden turns should lift him in a moment to wealth and high station: that whatever small competency he might gain, should be won by the sweat of his brow, that, before he could find so much as an arbour to sit down in, he should master at least half the ascent of 'the Hill of Difficulty;' that he should not even marry a beautiful girl or a lady of

rank. As Adam's son he should share Adam's doom, and drain throughout life a mixed and moderate cup of enjoyment."

(qtd. Christ 62)

Thus, Brontë created William Crimsworth, her plain and unemotional professor.

THE PLAIN, UNEMOTIONAL PROFESSOR

The Professor can be described as Brontë's most Victorian novel in its insistence in demonstrating character in predominantly moral terms (Burkhart 54). The Professor was rejected by at least nine publishers. Those who rejected it did so even while recognizing that it was "original" and "faithful to nature" (Gerin 313). It is ironic that these publishers described it as "deficient in startling incident and thrilling excitement" (Gerin 313) and believed it would never suit circulating libraries. Later, many of these same publishers criticized the overly-passionate nature of Jane Eyre. Finished by the spring of 1846, The Professor illuminates Brontë's state of mind during the

last year of her correspondence with M. Heger. Brontë gives a clear, concise description of the streets, churches, gardens and houses of Brussels. She describes the Pensionnat itself: the entrance, the glass doors, the playground, the garden, the refectory, and the classrooms. Maintaining her intention of curbing the imagination and emotionalism in her work, she does not present a picture of her beloved M. Heger. She simply describes all of those things which surround him. She sees no need to fictionalize locations and names as she does later in Villette. Brontë has no intention of revealing her psychological and emotional truth in The Professor. She has every intention of maintaining her vow of purging her work from Angrian influence.

Certainly, to a great extent, Brontë achieved her intention of purging The Professor of the influence of Angria. Brontë's Angrian world was a world of imagination, violence, and excitement. In Crimsworth's world, instead of "vivid contrasts of light and shade, fulness of joy and hopeless anguish" (Williams 125), extremities neutralize each other and every evil is balanced by a good, death by religion, sickness by

patience, imagination by reason and pain by hope.

Bronte proceeds to write about the struggles of everyday life and ends by writing a story about a hero who has very little to struggle with at all.

Crimsworth is always in control.

Throughout the novel, Crimsworth is the center of the reader's attention. By means of a completely obtrusive and basically unreliable voice, Brontë explores the reasons and methods by which Crimsworth presents himself to the world (Tromly 105). Crimsworth appears unreliable as he expediently switches his affections from Zoraide Reuter to Frances Henri. After unboarding his window, he covertly watches the young school girls in the garden. On a number of occasions, by means of short or oblique allusions, he underplays significant events in his life as if they had no emotional meaning. For example, at the end of the novel, he mentions, merely in passing, the birth of his son. He also nonchalantly mentions the return to England and the passing of ten years. The reader is totally uninvolved in these events because Brontë is uninvolved.

If Crimsworth can de-emphasize the important

experiences of his life, he can also inflate the unimportant. After leaving his job in Bigben Close, he describes a walk in the country. Anger, resentment, fury and anxiety would be entirely logical human reactions to his brother Edward's cruel treatment. However, Crimsworth is in control. Reason and rationality rule his nature. At other times, Crimsworth interprets his experiences in a manner that is difficult to understand. When he thinks he has lost Frances, through the deviousness of Zoraida Reuter, he offers a long discussion of suffering and consolation of religion:

But the man of regular life and rational mind never despairs. He loses his property--it is a blow--he staggers a moment; then, his energies, roused by the smart, are at work to seek a remedy: activity soon mitigates regret. Sickness affects him; he takes patience--endures what he cannot cure. Acute pain racks him: his writhing limbs know not where to find rest; he leans on Hope's anchor. Death takes from him what he loves; roots up, and tears violently away the stem round which his affections were twined--a dark, dismal time, a frightful wrench--but

some morning "Religion" looks into his desolate house with sunrise, and says, that another world, another life, he shall meet his kindred again.

(Brontë, PROF. 224)

After Crimsworth's reconciliation to pain and suffering, he asserts that he is a reasonable man: he can control his grief. Crimsworth's most important moments usually take the form of internal conflicts between moral ideas. When he regrets having resigned his teaching job because he cannot marry Frances, his conscience speaks to him: "Down, stupid tormentors," cried she; "the man had done his duty" (Brontë, Prof 276).

Annette Tromly, in her article, "The Professor," suggests that Crimsworth should be represented with a demon on one shoulder and an angel on the other: the demon of imagination and the angel of repression. His world is thoroughly separated. The world of imagination is enclosed within and quickly suppressed when it threatens to emerge. Crimsworth does struggle with passion. However, the angel of repression rescues him and allows him to remain pure in a world of evil and passion. The desire for release is defeated by his

reasonable nature. Stern, meticulous Crimsworth exhausts a great deal of energy guarding himself against assault: assault by other people, but most of all, assault by his own impulses (Tromly 107).

Crimsworth's passionate impulses are undesirable and must be sealed off or hidden from public view.

Enclosure is his distinctive way of dealing with any person or impulse that makes him uncomfortable. He hides his real self from his cruel brother's glance: "I felt as secure against his scrutiny as if I had had on a casque with the visor down" (Brontë, PROF 23). In a similar fashion, he handles his students with ease:

In less than five minutes they had thus revealed to me their characters, and in less than five minutes I had buckled on a breastplate of steely indifference and let down a visor of impassible austerity.

(Brontë, PROF 117)

Crimsworth, by shutting himself up and the world out, achieves his own state of contentment. The face or voice he presents to the world is one devoid of emotion. But his sense of contentment is a fragile state, especially when that contentment is threatened by his own emotions. Most of Crimsworth's inner life

can be described in terms of an excessive need for control along with the inevitable opposite: the release of emotion (Tromly 109). Brontë struggles to maintain her vow that Crimsworth will be like "Adam's son"

(Christ 62):

being a steady, reasonable man, I did not allow the resentment, disappointment, and grief, engendered in my mind by this evil chance, to grow there to any monstrous size; nor did I allow them to monopolize the whole space of my heart; I pent them, on the contrary, in one strait and secret nook. In the daytime, too, when I was about my duties, I put them on the silent system; and it was only after I had closed the door of my chamber at night that I somewhat relaxed my severity towards these morose nurslings, and allowed vent to their language of murmurs; then, in revenge, they sat on my pillow, haunted my bed, and kept me awake with their long midnight cry.

(Brontë, PROF 225)

Crimsworth is a narrator who has been deprived of imaginative energy as a result of Brontë's attempt to

discipline her own imagination (Williams 126).

Crimsworth's narrative is divided into two separate parts: the inner life and the outer world. He exerts a great deal of energy to keep them separate. However, the two poles of existence, the outer rational and the inner imaginative, try to merge. Brontë prevents this emergence of a new kind of self-identity by controlling the action and plot. Crimsworth is not allowed to enter into the complexity of life in Brussels. He stands outside and observes; thus, the foreign element of the city is something to control. Soon after he arrives, he deduces that Pelet's school, in which the students are stupid and easily controlled, is merely a microcosm for the entire Belgian nation (Williams 128). Perhaps, the oddest incident occurs when he believes that old Madame Pelet has invited him to her room for amorous purposes: "I've heard of old Frenchwomen doing odd things in that line" (Brontë, PROF 96). Crimsworth does not see the warmth or humor in this situation. He refuses to examine the incident in that light. He looks at it with the controlling, cold light of reason and it becomes absurd.

Crimsworth achieves his greatest feat of control in his relationship with Pelet and Mdlle. Reuter. One

might believe that Crimsworth would be at a disadvantage when dealing with the older Belgian couple, but he is in total control of the situation. The relationship of Pelet and Mdlle. Reuter is based on sensuality and materialism and can be seen as an extension of some of Crimsworth's own unconscious emotions. He does not recognize these traits within himself and practices a kind of self-deceit. By projecting his sensualism and materialism on the Belgian couple, he can deny it in himself. Brontë presents Crimsworth's experience in terms of psychological realism: a figure of purity uncorrupted by the evil that surrounds him.

Although Crimsworth is a figure of purity, nonetheless, Brontë seems on the verge of allowing him some release. He describes Mdlle. Reuter, when she first appears, as a good apple, "as sound at the core as it is red on the rind" (Brontë, PROF 107). But Bronte draws back and does not allow Crimsworth to recognize the sensual nature of his feelings:

Her presence and manner...sealed up all that was good, elicited all that was noxious in my nature; sometimes they enervated my senses, but they always hardened my heart.

(Brontë, PROF 260)

Crimsworth's yearnings toward women are conventionally masculine, but his moral judgements of the stereotypical "doll woman" illustrate that he is quite an unusual male (Gilbert 319). He appears to be ambitious, but his reserve and passivity, stereotypically female, are illustrated by his acquiescence to being "kept down like some...governess" (Brontë, PROF 27). Brontë believed herself to be a failure at financial independence just as Crimsworth, while employed by his brother, felt powerless like a woman "wrecked and stranded on the shores of commerce" (Brontë, PROF 47). The result for Crimsworth is to become more insular, more closed in and less able to demonstrate any emotionality.

Brontë's intention to maintain reason as the guiding force in The Professor was not altogether successful. This is clearly illustrated by Crimsworth's relationship to Frances Henri. Crimsworth explains: "Reason was my physician...did me good" and rejoices that in Frances "the more dangerous flame burned safely under the eye of reason which could reduce the rebel, and humble its blaze to embers" (Brontë, PROF 157). He believes that reason must justify all impulses. However, after all this resolve, Crimsworth, unbelievably, refers to Frances as "my

darling, my cherished-in secret, Imagination, the tender and the mighty" (Brontë, PROF 37).

When Crimsworth pictures a meeting with Frances, he is afraid he may not be able to control his emotion and passion. This is the first introduction to the reader of Brontë's great concerns of the non-rational: imagination and feeling. Frances introduces feeling into the narrative by replying to Hunsden: "Better to be without logic than without feeling" (Brontë, PROF 337). In the relationship of Crimsworth and Frances, the reason-judgement-common sense versus feeling-imagination-intuition conflict surfaces, a conflict that dominates the narrative of Jane Eyre and Villette (Hellman 288). When Crimsworth experiences sexual attraction to Zoraide Reuter, he appears to be willing to succumb to passion and reject his own standards, but he is saved from this distasteful action by the appearance of the strong and faithful Frances.

In The Professor, as well as her other novels, Brontë insists that her narrators will find peace and contentment only when they discover their true soul-mates (Blom 72). Frances is the one individual who can relieve Crimsworth's isolation. Even though they have never met outside the classroom situation, he believes

he loves her. When they first meet outside the normal environment of the classroom, they are really only comfortable when she reads Paradise Lost and he corrects her intonation. At the meeting after this, he proposes marriage and she accepts. The love plot seems to be artificial and even a little absurd. The relationship remains theoretical as their love is never brought to life. We are simply told by the narrator of latent passion in Frances, but offered no evidence of her passion for Crimsworth except, perhaps, as her teacher. The teaching situation is one of Brontë's favorite versions of the love-power game and is especially compelling between Jane and Rochester in Jane Eyre as the teacher-student relationship is continually evolving. However, in this novel, Crimsworth is always the master and Frances is always the pupil. In fact, Frances must speak with two voices: the voice of the meek, retiring student for Crimsworth and the strong, self-reliant teacher for herself; thus, the voices never coalesce and form a unified whole.

Brontë's language shows her working toward two kinds of truth: realism and poetry or imagination. She achieves her best results when the two fuse and psychological realism is arrived at by imaginative means (Ewbank 179). This does not occur in

The Professor. Brontë has made the first step toward this emergence, but she is, as yet, unable to allow both voices to emerge in one character. This achievement occurs in the development of the character of Jane Eyre.

THE INNER VOICE OF JANE

Jane Eyre was begun under very difficult circumstances for Brontë. The Professor had been continually rejected, Branwell was a failure, her father was ill, and her teaching plans had come to nothing. She could never have believed that in a little over a year she would be famous and that in January of 1848, G. H. Lewes, in the Westminster Review, would declare Jane Eyre as "decidedly the best novel of the season" (Pinion 105). Thackeray spent an entire day reading Jane Eyre and told Brontë that it had given her the kind of success he had worked ten years to achieve (Pinion 105). Additional reviews were also complimentary:

"Jane Eyre is a remarkable production"

The Times (Gerin 340)

"Reality--deep, significant reality--is the

characteristic of this book." Fraser's

(Gerin 340)

"From out of the depths of a sorrowing
experience here is a voice speaking to the
experience of thousands." Edinburgh Review

(Gerin 341)

"A very pathetic tale...so like truth that it
is difficult to avoid believing that much
(sic) the characters and incidents are taken
from life."

Blackwood's

(Gerin 341)

In almost a hundred and forty-five years of
academic analysis and research, the wonderful qualities
of Jane Eyre are still recognized. Brontë had come far
from her overly emotional fantasies of her childhood
and from her complete rejection of passion in
The Professor to the creation of a narrative which
combined ordinary events with passion and imagination.

Perhaps Virginia Woolf described it accurately in
her article, "Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights," when
she stated that when we think of Brontë, we have
to cast our thoughts and minds back to the middle of
the last century to an isolated parsonage on the

Yorkshire moors and to a young woman in poverty, unhappy and lonely (155). These circumstances, as they affected Brontë's characters, left traces in her work. Woolf depicts Brontë as a writer who "takes us by the hand, forces us along the path, makes us see what she sees and never leaves us for a moment or allows us to forget her" (156). Brontë does not attempt to solve the problems of life; all her energy goes into the declaration:

let my heart be heaved by the exultant
movement which, while it swelled it in
trouble, expanded it with life; and best of
all, to open my inward ear to a tale that was
never ended--a tale my imagination created,
and narrated continuously.

(Brontë, JE 1: 181)

Virginia Woolf writes that we do not read Brontë for observation of character--her characters are hardy and elementary; not for comedy--hers is harsh and crude; not for a philosophic view of life--hers is that of a country clergyman's daughter; but for her poetry and passion (158). She must only open the door to her soul.

Brontë was unable to release the passion in her soul in The Professor because of her self-imposed

restrictions but the restrictions disappear in Jane Eyre. Here the voice of passion speaks. G. H. Lewes, after the publication of Jane Eyre, advised Brontë not to stray too far from the ground of experience.

However, Brontë replied:

"imagination is a strong, restless faculty, which claims to be heard and exercised: are we to be quite deaf to her cry, and insensate to her struggles? When she shows us bright pictures, are we never to look at them, and try to reproduce them?"

(qtd. Sherry 51)

Brontë has, indeed, moved from the ordinary world of The Professor into the realm of imagination and romance. Brontë has the imaginative, comprehensive understanding of her material that enables her to fuse its separate parts into a real unity of voice: it is Brontë's vision of the completeness of life and of man's relation to his heart, mind, loved ones and God (Martin 58).

In Jane Eyre, the action moves toward the maturity and self-identity of the two central characters: Jane and Rochester. Jane's maturation is the most detailed and central of the two, but Rochester's development is necessary to complete Brontë's vision of the world.

The central consciousness of the novel, however, is that of Jane alone. We see all the action and the characters through her eyes. Even when Jane is an obvious passive receiver of information from other characters, Brontë never lets us forget how Jane is feeling. For example, when Rochester tells Jane about his Continental mistresses, Jane is concerned, not with Rochester's feelings, but with her own reactions:

I felt the truth of these words; and I drew from them the certain inference, that if I went so far to forget myself and all the teaching that had ever been instilled into me, as--under any pretext--with any justification--through any temptation--to become the successor of these poor girls, he would one day regard me with the same feeling which now in his mind desecrated their memory.

(Brontë, JE 1: 125)

Thus, we see Jane viewing an emotional situation through the eyes of reason.

Jane Eyre traces an individual's struggle, against almost insurmountable odds, to establish and maintain a voice of her own. When Jane comes to know

herself and her situation, she realizes her full predicament. She is free to choose "the busy world" (Brontë, JE 1: 138) and attain independence or she can acquiesce and be bound by Rochester's love. Like Brontë, Jane wishes to achieve some measure of independence. However, also like Brontë who obsessively dreamed of Angria, Jane is governed by her inner imaginative vision and turns inward to listen, not to the voice of convention, but to "a tale my imagination created and narrated continuously" (Brontë, JE 1: 181). It is this tale spoken to her inner soul that empowers Jane to recognize and stimulates her to cleave to her soul-mate (Blom 94).

Jane knows that Rochester is different from her in class and believes that he will eventually marry a woman from his class. The voice of reason speaks in Jane's ear but she still asserts:

he is not of their kind. I believe he is of mine;--I am sure he is,--I feel akin to him...I have something in my brain and heart, in my blood and nerves that assimilates me mentally to him.

(Brontë, JE 1: 292)

Despite the warnings of reason, Jane is ruled by

intuitive knowledge and exults in the pain that passion has to offer:

I looked (at Mr. Rochester), and had an acute pleasure in looking,--a precious, yet poignant pleasure; pure gold, with a steely point of agony: a pleasure like what the thirst perishing man might feel who knows the well to which he has crept is poisoned, yet stoops and drinks divine draughts nevertheless.

(Brontë, JE 1: 291)

Jane seems to be partly desiring of the pain and danger of love inherent in her world. Brontë has moved away from her cold, insular professor, Crimsworth, and allows Jane to speak in a passionate voice. Jane is originally attracted to Rochester because he is "dark, strong, and stern" (Brontë, JE 1: 188): a response that is totally irrational and rooted in passion alone. Jane is overwhelmingly drawn to the third story of the Hall and its small black doors which she imagines are "like a corridor in some Bluebeard's castle" (Brontë, JE 1: 176). In "silent revolt against her lot" (Brontë, JE 1: 181), Jane desires a singleness of vision and when Rochester asks her to accompany him to the upper floors of Thornfield, she accepts with

half-fearful excitement:

he held a key in his hand: approaching one of the small black doors, he put it in the lock; he paused and addressed me again. 'You don't turn sick at the sight of blood?' I think I shall not: I have never been tried yet. I felt a thrill while I answered him; but no coldness, and no faintness...I put my fingers into his, 'Warm and steady,' was his remark; he turned the key and opened the door.

(Brontë JE I:

349-50)

Jane, against all reason and rationality, puts her life in Rochester's hands. She surrenders to the passion which her imagination evokes. She does not really understand her danger until she is completely committed to Rochester.

Although Jane realizes "it is madness in all women to let a secret love kindle within them" (Brontë, JE I: 267), and despite the warnings of reason, she is helpless to defend herself against Rochester's psychological manipulation. However, Jane's courage and sense of self-identity remain unimpaired and lead her to the painful declaration:

If God had gifted me with some beauty, and much wealth, I should have made it as hard for you to leave me, as it is now for me to leave you...it is my spirit that addresses your spirit; just as if both had passed through the grave, and we stood at God's feet, equal--as we are!

(Brontë, JE 2: 23)

Thus, Rochester has forced her to acknowledge her passionate dependence on him. Brontë equates passion with a total release of all emotion. Jane is fearful that a release of her emotional nature will result in a loss of identity.

The war between passion and reason continues until on her wedding day, Jane sees a "veiled figure, so unlike my usual self that it seemed almost the image of a stranger" (Brontë, JE 2: 81); therefore, Jane's response to the interrupted marriage ceremony is ambiguous (Blom 98). Her first reaction is despair, but when Rochester pleads for her love, Jane asserts her independence and growing power over him:

the passing second of time...in which to control and restrain him...I felt an inward power; a sense of influence, which supported me. The crisis was perilous; but not without its charm.

(Brontë, JE 2: 108)

The manner in which Jane supports her refusal to become Rochester's mistress is very expressive. She refuses, not because she does not love him and not because of her conscience or reasonable nature, but because she must listen to her inner voice which tells her she must maintain her selfness, her oneness:

I care for myself. The more solitary, the more friendless, the more unsustained I am, the more I will respect myself.

(Brontë, JE 2: 134)

Reason and passion be damned. Jane listens to that inner voice which says, "I am important!"

Jane's flight from Rochester does not bring her happiness or contentment. At Moor House, she realizes that severe repression of passion only leads to a frigid imprisonment of her spirit. Under St. John's influence, she feels that her mind has become a "rayless dungeon" (Brontë, JE 2: 286). Jane imagines what her life would be, should she accept St. John's proposal:

but as his wife--at his side always, and always restrained, and always checked--forced to keep the fire of my nature continually low, to compel it to burn inwardly and never utter a cry, though the imprisoned flame

consumed vital after vital--this would be unendurable.

(Brontë, JE 2:294)

Jane believes that St. John wants to annihilate her sense of self-identity: "If I join St. John, I abandon half myself: if I go to India, I go to premature death" (Brontë, JE 2: 288).

Jane searches for some middle ground between a complete rejection and a complete release of passion. If Rochester represents passion, then St. John represents reason. Jane is torn between the two opposing forces simply because part of her nature responds to both of these forces. Both Rochester and St. John desire to marry Jane but for different reasons. Rochester wants her to make him a better person and St. John wants her to join him in a life of sacrifice. In both instances, Jane's inner voice or self-identity would be destroyed. Jane must choose: to accept Rochester and give in to her passionate nature or to accept St. John and live in a world without the color of the imagination.

Jane believes she is deciding the fate of her very soul when she listens to her inner voice and rejects St. John:

I broke from St. John...It was my time to assume ascendancy. My powers were in play

and in force...where there is energy to
 command well enough, obedience never fails.
 I seemed to penetrate very near a Mighty
 Spirit...I rose...--took a resolve--and lay
 down, unscared, enlightened--eager but for
 the daylight. (Brontë, JE 2: 316)

Jane prays until she receives the answer she desires:
 the voice calling her to return to Rochester. She
 equivocates between passion and reason embodied by
 Rochester and St. John, but she finally takes control
 and listens to her intuition.

The extent of Jane's success appears when she, who
 has been described as a caged or wounded bird, becomes
 a "sky-lark" (Bronte JE 2: 349) and Rochester
 becomes a "fettered wild beast or bird," "a caged
 eagle" (Bronte, JE 2: 335). Rochester's attempt to
 deceive Jane by concealing his bigamy forced Jane into
 the moral decision to leave. However, after changed
 circumstances, she was able to acknowledge her
 passionate nature and bind Rochester to her in a way
 not possible when she denied her own passion. The
 final words of Jane Eyre belong to St. John:

My master...has forewarned me. Dally he
 announces more distinctly,--'Surely I come
 quickly!' and hourly I more eagerly
 respond,--Amen; even so come, Lord Jesus.

(Brontë, JE 2: 372)

Jane does not wait for heavenly fulfillment. She made the passionate and imaginative choice only after the moral issues had been resolved. Her fulfillment is achieved in her world and on her own terms.

Jane and Rochester's marriage affirms the meaning of life and love within a wide range of emotional imperatives (Howells 186). Brontë presents an acceptance of the need to take into account all kinds of feeling when presenting a realistic presentation of human experience. Jane, the central consciousness of the novel, resolves the duality within herself in a temperate and benevolent maturity which acknowledges man as both a rational and emotional being.

In the end, Brontë offers no easy solution. In her world, rational happiness is not achieved through a neglect of emotional imperatives nor is it achieved through an acknowledgement of human passion. The solution lies in a combination of both forces within the individual. Perhaps, Brontë has succeeded in re-tying Donne's "subtle knot which makes us man" (qtd. in Howells 187) in a manner in which ambiguities, doubts and conflicts, which form the life of experience, are resolved in the end for her characters (Howells 187). She describes emotional states of mind and feeling but also insists on a strong acknowledgement of the world and its different demands.

Brontë is able to combine imagination within the realistic context of character and environment.

From the day of its publication, Jane Eyre has been described as adding something new to the tradition of the English novel (Scargill 120). This new quality for some is the voice of a woman who speaks with candor about herself; to others, it is passion, although what passion is, no one says. All agree that Jane Eyre possesses a kind of intensity that holds the reader spell-bound. Most English novels, with the exception of those in the Gothic tradition, were concerned mainly with the external, with the probability of events and with believable characters. After the publication of Jane Eyre, the English novel turned away from the external toward the description of experiences uniquely personal (Scargill 121). The personal experience has an intensity of feeling which attracts the reader and which, also, puzzles the reader. Brontë has depicted a character, Jane Eyre, whose internal struggle does just that: attracts and puzzles. We know Rochester is wrong for her, but she loves him; and we know that St. John is right for her, according to convention and social class, but she does not love him. The battle rages between the passionate choice and the reasonable choice. It is the internal struggle between the flesh and the spirit that

fascinates the reader.

The expression of this experience in a novel is very difficult. The poet simply recreates his or her emotional experience in whatever manner he or she desires. Brontë's emotions are ones generally expressed through the medium of poetry. However, she chose the novel and, in so doing, created a new form. Jane Eyre contains elements of fiction used as a poet utilizes language and imagery: to impose belief, even though it is by irrational means (Scargill 122):

Reader, I married him.

I have now been married ten years. I know what it is to live entirely for and with what I love best on earth. I hold myself supremely blest--blest beyond what language can express; because I am my husband's life as fully as he is mine. No woman was ever nearer to her mate than I am: absolutely more bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh. I know no weariness of my Edward's society: he knows none of mine, any more than we do of the pulsation of the heart that beats in our separate bosoms; consequently, we are ever together. To be together is for us to be at

once as free as in solitude, as gay as in company. We talk, I believe, all day long: to talk to each other is but an animated and audible thinking. All my confidence is bestowed on him; all his confidence is devoted to me: we are precisely suited in character; perfect concord is the result.

(Brontë, JE 2:368-69)

In Jane Eyre, Brontë found a way to universalize her imaginative image of Angria. Divided between the desire to remain passive and the desire to release the excitement of passion, accepting the strictly rational, but believing and trusting in intuition, imagination and vision, she created Jane Eyre, who turns inward to fight the battle between the opposing forces of reason and passion.

THE LONG-SUFFERING CAROLINE

Shirley was begun on a wave of confidence inspired by the success of Jane Eyre. The story begins with the three curates providing comic relief, but the story takes on a graver and more reflective mood with the introduction of Caroline Helstone. This novel was written over a period of nineteen months and was completed in a time of grief and despair for

Brontë: the deterioration of Branwell and, of course, more importantly, the loss of her two sisters. Brontë turned to the discipline of her work for consolation:

"Lonely as I am, how should I be if Providence had never given me courage to adopt a career--perseverance to plead through two long, weary years with publishers till they admitted me? How should I be with youth past, sisters lost, a resident in a moorland parish where there is not a single educated family? In that case I should have no world at all: the raven, weary of surveying the deluge, and without an ark to return to, would be my type. As it is, something like a hope and motive sustains me still. I wish all your daughters--I wish every woman in England, had also a hope and a motive. Alas! there are many old maids who have neither."

(qtd. Gerin 394)

Thus, Brontë has formulated the essence of Shirley. It is a novel about the situation of women: women in love, women suffering from unrequited love, and women who have never loved and will never be loved (Gerin 394). Brontë speaks to her readers about these issues in her third novel, Shirley.

Victorian writers' habit of addressing the reader directly was based on the belief that reader and author shared a common background and a common belief system and that the writer's duty was to instruct as well as to entertain. If a Victorian author felt his or her voice was being ignored, he or she simply spoke in a more strident manner. Brontë speaks loudly in Shirley. She sees herself as interpreter, teacher and guide (Burkhart 78). Thankfully, most of what is true and good in Shirley comes from Brontë's heart and not her head.

In Shirley, Brontë wanted to create a big, detailed world-picture, but the best moments in the novel occur when individual passions are intensely presented. She presents a socio-economic historical depiction of society by abandoning the I-narrator for the more varied role of the omniscient author (Pinion 125). It is apparent from the many scenes and links in the novel, such as the meeting of the curates, the seige on Hollow's Mill, Yorke's obtaining employment for William Farren, the attempt to kill Robert Moore, Shirley's refusal of conventional suitors and Caroline's illness, that no central individual could have a constancy of direct experience necessary to narrate the historical events and the many personal

relationships.

Brontë felt a great respect and admiration for Thackeray, and when Vanity Fair appeared, she considered him to be a giant of the literary world. She was especially attracted to his dedication to truth and realism. Perhaps her admiration for Thackeray is one of the reasons Brontë abandoned the wild and wonderful emotional narrative of Jane Eyre. For whatever the reason, she makes her change of policy clear from the beginning of the novel:

If you think, from this prelude that anything like a romance is preparing for you, reader, you never were more mistaken. Do you anticipate sentiment, and poetry, and reverie? Do you expect passion, and stimulus, and melodrama? Calm your expectations; reduce them to a lowly standard. Something real, cool, and solid, lies before you; something unromantic as Monday morning, when all who have work wake with the consciousness that they must rise and betake themselves thereto.

(Brontë, SHIR 1: 1-2)

From the first publication of Shirley, the novel has been criticized as lacking the singleness of vision

or the tension between passion and reason that is so apparent in Jane Eyre. However, one can see a kind of design even from the disconnected parts of the story. The novel presents the same passionate inner voice that is the incubating impulse of all Brontë's work (Korg 126). The characters divide into three distinct groups, each with a different attitude toward passion. The group most clearly identified with passion includes Caroline Helstone, Shirley Keeldar, the Moore brothers and most of the children, but not the parents of the Yorke family. At a distance from passion are the ordinary Yorkshiremen, such as Mr. Helstone, Joe Scott and the Yorke parents. These characters are unimaginative, plain country people and do not share the passionate nature of the heroes and heroines. Farthest from passion are the Yorkshire foreigners like the curates and the Sympons, whose emotions are shallow and motivated by convention rather than feeling (Korg 126).

The narrative interest in Shirley is almost completely restricted to Caroline Helstone and her destiny because she is the only character choosing her way of life. Caroline is so discouraged by Robert Moore's coldness to her that she begins to question her intuitive passionate inner voice and attempts to make a

rational choice between the romantic and common sense approaches to life. The psychological tension between passion and reason within Caroline Helstone is apparent but not as intense as in Jane Eyre. Caroline's visits to the old maids are journeys made in preparation for a life of renunciation. However, when Caroline's unrequited love leads to a serious illness, she is cured by the revelation that Mrs. Pryor is her mother. Caroline discovers her true identity, and in so doing, her doubts disappear and she is able to accept her passionate nature and wait for Mr. Moore to recognize her as his soul-mate.

The reader of Shirley becomes preoccupied wondering about the relationship between the foursome of Caroline, Shirley, Robert and Louis. The romantic entanglements of these characters are interrupted by sociological realities. The strong, intense relationships between these four lovers must often give way to considerations about money, class, status, power and economic stability. These mundane matters often interrupt the passion and love that Brontë is building. Perhaps, Brontë saw connections between the actualities of the world and the passionate and romantic world of Caroline, but the reader has a difficult time perceiving these connections. What emerges is a

nervous movement from passion and romance to the realities of real life that results in a jarring distraction. Brontë had taken to heart a number of unfortunate comments from critics whose opinions she respected. They criticized the excessive fantasy of Jane Eyre and chided her to abandon imaginative excess in favor of the "real" life. Shirley was, perhaps, an attempt to please these critics. She was determined not to abandon her passionate and imaginative world but tried to separate it from the real world. In Jane Eyre, the battle was fought within the consciousness of the character. In Shirley, Caroline's struggle is external with forces impinging on her; however, we really find it difficult to become involved because we are not allowed to share in her intuitive consciousness.

Caroline explains a woman's position:

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 demonstration as a rebellion against her instincts, and would vindictively repay it afterwards by the thunderbolt of

self-contempt smiting suddenly in secret.

(Brontë, SHIR 1: 149)

However, Brontë offers no consolation or answer. She simply says:

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...is as 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. For the whole remnant of your life, if you survive the test--some, it is said die under it--you will be stonger, wiser, less sensitive.

(Brontë, SHIR 1: 149)

Caroline was prepared to learn the lesson and endure stoically a life bereft of love and passion, but Brontë relented in the end and allowed her to marry her beloved Robert. Perhaps Brontë engaged in a change-of-heart or wishful thinking and allowed her readers a happy ending. Brontë attempted to separate passion and love from real life, but discovered she could not. Alone and grieving, she faced life with a stoicism that declared that a life without love would be meaningless.

Because Brontë does not seem to be intuitively involved in Shirley, she does not seem to be able to determine what is relevant and what is not. There is no central consciousness to hold the threads of the story together. She presents full-length representations of the three curates and the Yorke family because these are characters who seem to be drawn from real life or reality. Sometimes, she stops writing fiction and begins writing biography (Knies 162). She even gives a description of the Yorke family attending the funeral of one of their children sometime in the future. Brontë appears to be unable, at this time, to differentiate between the external "real" and the internal "true."

We, as readers, see Brontë's heroine from the

outside; therefore, we are unable to make an emotional connection with her as we do with Jane Eyre. Caroline Helstone has passionate thoughts and feelings, but Brontë clouds Caroline's reactions by so many other issues, such as women's rights, political divisions, and economic situations, that the reader becomes overwhelmed with information and feels no personal or emotional involvement.

In Jane Eyre, Brontë created one of the greatest voices in literature. It was a unified, clear voice that presented a consistent point from which to view the action. However, in Shirley, we hear not one voice but many: social reform, emotionalism, realism, amusement, irony and sympathy. The noise becomes deafening.

It seems possible that Brontë was attempting to produce the type of work that would be expected of the Victorian writer of the time; however, one also feels that she must have felt strongly about her subject matter. She was certainly very concerned about the situation of women and the pain of spinsterhood. Nevertheless, Shirley lacks the balance and harmony she achieved in Jane Eyre. Brontë, herself, came to realize this at a time when she was far into the writing of Villette when she wrote to her publisher, George Smith:

"You will see that Villette touches on no matter of public interest. I cannot write books handling the topics of the day; it is of no use trying. Nor can I write a book for its moral. Nor can I take up a philanthropic scheme, though I honour philanthropy....To manage these great matters rightly they must be long and practically studied--their bearings known intimately, and their evils felt genuinely; they must not be taken up as a business matter and a trading speculation."

(qtd. Knies 166)

Brontë seems to have at last realized that she was not a Victorian writer like a Dickens or a Thackeray, but a writer who must listen to her inner voice and follow it implicitly.

LUCY: THE PLAIN, HOMELY GOVERNESS

Villette was probably begun in the early autumn of 1851, but it was not an easy task for Brontë. She describes her difficulty in writing this novel:

"Jane Eyre" was not written under such circumstances, nor were two-thirds of "Shirley." I got so miserable about it, I could bear no allusion to the book."

(qtd. Sherry 85)

The difficult circumstances she referred to were the deaths of her sisters, of course, and the fact that she felt she had no one to advise her on her work. Her letters are filled with references to periods of depression and illness in which writing was impossible:

"Certainly the past winter has been to me a strange time. Had I the prospect before me of living it over again, my prayers must necessarily be, Let this cup pass from me."

(qtd. Moglen 195)

Villette is regarded by many readers and critics as Brontë's best work. Many people believe that this is her most autobiographical story telling the tale of her painful love affair with M. Heger at the Brussels

pensionnat. There really can be little doubt of its similarity to many of Brontë's experiences in Brussels; however, there is no evidence and we have no way of knowing about the autobiographical accuracy of many of the events and feelings described in the novel.

Brontë, in Villette, returns to the problem of the relationship between the non-rational and rational aspects of life. Lucy Snowe, like Jane Eyre, is torn between these conflicting beliefs, but, unlike Jane, she is not initially engaged by the warmth of passion or the coldness of its absence.

The realistic parts of the novel are excellently detailed, particularly those which depict everyday life. They seem true or believable especially in their psychological effects such as the difficulty of the teachers-governesses to escape from the isolation of the schoolroom. The reader can visualize the pensionnat, its rooms, the desks, the students and the strange path in the garden, but the story belongs to Lucy Snowe alone.

Villette is a first-person narrated record of the emotional pain and suffering Lucy experiences. Therefore, her suffering seems genuine because she describes it directly to the reader. Lucy's concern is

not so much with what actually happens but with how she feels about the occurrence. Does it cause her pain, joy or fear?

Lucy is directed by voices and passions which require a passivity of consciousness that then imbues her with strength (Hague 587). Lucy listens to an inner voice after Miss Marchmont's death that instructs her about the future. This voice empowers Lucy and supplies the answers she desires:

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.

(Brontë, VILL 1:

65-66)

Later, an inner voice tells Lucy to "go to Villette" (Brontë, VILL 1:93) and when she finds herself by

coincidence at Madame Beck's pensionnat, she believes that Fate and Providence have directed her actions. But it is really the intuitive inner voice of Lucy that is the agent of her actions. There is no evidence that Lucy fights against these inner voices. Against all reason and rationality, she accepts the validity of her own intuition. The acceptance of the inner voices by Lucy occurs because they are intuitive, kind encouragements that issue from the character's mental connection with a greater area of experience and knowledge (Hague 588). This area or dimension is inaccessible to reasonable questioning and investigating. This realm of emotional experience simply exists. No one can explain it or need even try. Lucy simply accepts and listens to her voices.

These intuitive incidents are a pivotal part of the emphasis Brontë places on the non-rational ways of knowing. The validity that she gives these events is shown by the fact that they usually occur at times of great emotional intensity and the direction of the narrative is usually changed because of Lucy's intuitive consciousness.

Lucy's relationship with Paul Emanuel illustrates

Brontë's belief in the necessity of the fusing of the consciousness that results in Lucy and Paul Emanuel becoming soul-mates. Lucy describes Paul Emanuel's central quality:

...the terrible unerring penetration of instinct which pierced in its hiding-place the last lurking thought of the heart, and discerned under florid veillings the bare, barren places of the spirit: yes, and its perverted tendencies and its hidden false curves...

(Brontë, VILL 2: 140)

Madame Beck and Graham Bretton are examples of characters who do not have intuitive abilities or the ability to sympathize with others or connect with the consciousness of others (Hague 594). In Jane Eyre, St. John warns Jane that he lacks sympathy and that reason and not feeling is his guide. Madame Beck and Graham Bretton could easily have said the same. Lucy describes her intuitive impression of Graham Bretton:

His natural attitude was not the meditative, nor his natural mood the sentimental, impressionable he was as dimpling water, but, almost as water, unimpressible: the breeze,

the sun moved him--metal could not grave, nor
Fire brand.

(Brontë, VILL 2: 12)

Graham Bretton is not Lucy's soul-mate simply because they do not connect intuitively. He views life dispassionately and with detachment. Lucy loves, suffers and lives with total involvement.

Madame Beck also lacks sympathy:

She did not wear a woman's aspect, but rather a man's. Power of a particular kind strongly limited 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.

(Brontë, VILL 1: 123)

For Lucy Snowe, like Jane Eyre, real power lies in the knowledge of others that intuitive emotions reveal. Lucy believes that she intuitively knows Madame Beck; therefore, she can manipulate Madame Beck because she is able to pierce Madame's deceptive external nature. Lucy's heightened states of perception contain a wisdom that emerges from passion rather than from a rational or reasonable explanation. Lucy knows it because she feels it. This is the reality which she declined to

define for Paul Emanuel when she acknowledges that even though she lacks a formal education, she has compensation: "I sometimes, not always, feel a knowledge of my own" (Brontë, VILL 2: 171).

Lucy's experience in the park is the high-point of emotional release. Madame Beck's drug, given to dull Lucy's mental faculties, produces the exact opposite effect. She experiences a heightened sense of emotional perception and correctly perceives that she will gain valuable information. Even though Lucy incorrectly interprets the relationship of Paul Emanuel and Justine-Marie Sauveur, she still retains faith in her intuition and declares that miscalculations of intuition sometimes occur, but that "there is a kind of presentiment which is never mistaken" (Brontë, VILL 2:359). Therefore, although intuitive emotion is basically correct, it is vulnerable to the equivalent type of misunderstanding intrinsic to rational and reasonable explanations (Hague 596). Brontë appears to be telling the reader that if one must choose between trusting the inner voice and adhering strictly to the rational aspects of any situation, one must trust his or her own intuitive knowledge because it is as reliable as the expected rational behavior, perhaps more so. Lucy and Paul chose one another. Their love

is requited, but remains unfulfilled as Paul is probably lost at sea and Lucy remains a spinster and school teacher. However, the memory of love remains for Lucy.

Elizabeth Gaskell's description of Brontë's work routine illustrates Brontë's trust in an intuitively based creative process that emphasizes her receptivity (Hague 598). When asked to depict a circumstance she had never encountered:

She thought intently on it for many and many a night before falling to sleep--wondering what it was like, or how it would be,--till at length, sometimes after the progress of her story had been arrested at this one point for weeks, she awakened up in the morning with all clear before her, as if she had in reality gone through the experience, and then could describe it, word for word, as it had happened.

(Gaskell 386)

Brontë confessed to Gaskell that she could not write on any regular schedule but would wake up one morning and all would be clear. She believed in her need to continue her receptivity to the creative imagination.

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, in The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-

Century Literary Imagination, make the point that continued submission to male dominance bequeathed a sympathetic imagination to women (439). In fact, the imaginative creativity that intuition makes possible demands a receptive passivity. Brontë's fictional world illustrates her understanding of the workings of the intuition and imagination.

Words like "truth" and "nature" were favorites of Brontë. Her use of these words gives the impression that technique was her last concern and that "feeling" and "intuition" were more important in the creative process. Brontë describes her artistic philosophy:

"Say what you will...say it as ably as you will--Truth is better than Art; Burns' songs are better than Bulwer's Epics. Thackeray's rude, careless sketches are preferable to thousands of carefully finished paintings. Ignorant as I am, I dare to hold and maintain that doctrine."

(qtd. Knies 47)

She is concerned that technical ability will be mistaken for real content and that this will result in a sterile, cold intellectual type of writing. It was this coldness and sterility that Brontë wanted to avoid. For her, writing was involvement and the

author's intuition, passion and truth were the most important elements of that involvement. She believed in the inspired writer rather than the careful technocrat.

As Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have pointed out, Brontë was not always in control of her vision (311). In Brontë's Preface to the 1859 edition of Wuthering Heights, she states that her muse works its own will and she has little choice but to obey. For one who felt so intensely the inner life, it is not surprising that she created heroines who espoused the same beliefs. It is also not surprising that the passion/reason conflict exists in the psyche of Jane Eyre and the psyche of Lucy Snowe. Even though Brontë was adamant in her beliefs about the inner life, the prevailing attitudes of the time taught her that she was wrong; thus, the internal conflict continued throughout her life.

Brontë's work has an intensity which many critics have attributed to an inadequate artistic detachment from her subjects. However, in a way, this is part of her theory of writing. She did not write about herself but merely identified with what she was writing. Her

narrators do not view life with detachment but with passion and feeling. Objectivity would be reasonable and rational but what does that have to do with the passion and imagination of the inner life? One believes that Brontë would answer, "absolutely nothing."

One does feel, however, that Brontë explored some of her own problems and disappointments in her work. In essence, they are all tales that present the female situation but in different ways. In The Professor, even though William Crimsworth is the narrator, we see Frances Henri, who must actually divide her life into two parts: the passionate, little student entranced by her master and, at the same time, the self-sufficient teacher. Jane Eyre examines the social problems of the governess, but a governess who dreams and listens to her inner voice and chooses a man who, according to reason alone, is totally inappropriate. In Shirley we see the problems of the spinster who feels passion and love but who must not demonstrate any emotion. Brontë relents and allows Caroline Helstone to marry but not until she shows what a life without the color of passion can do to the soul. In Villette, we again see the problem of spinsterhood combined with plainness in physical appearance. However, Lucy Snowe lives by intuition and feeling. Her inner voice tells her what

to do and she listens. Lucy's reward is the love of Paul Emanuel.

Robert Heilman, in "Charlotte Brontë, Reason, and the Moon," states that Brontë's narrative demonstrates her immense attraction for the non-rational aspects of life (288). For Brontë, the choice that ends the conflict within her characters may be reasonable and rational but the instrument of decision may be non-rational or even supernatural (288).

Brontë died March 31, 1855, at the age of thirty-nine. She never really solved the dilemma of listening to the inner passionate voice or responding to the Victorian world's expectations of behavior. She struggled to solve this contradiction. Her characters, Jane Eyre and Lucy Snowe, respond to passions which are not acceptable to the established social order of the time, but which are "true" and "real" in Brontë's psyche. Brontë became entranced by that "true" and "real" inner voice; when she listened, Jane and Lucy emerged.

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