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## Enclosure, Transformation, Emergence: Space And The Construction Of Gender Roles In The Novels Of Charlotte Brontë

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Enclosure, Transformation, Emergence: Space And The Construction  
Of Gender Roles In The Novels Of Charlotte Brontë

by

Michelle Dawn Lattanzio

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
Department of English  
College of Arts and Sciences  
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## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated in memoriam to my father, Thomas Daniel Lattanzio, b.1911 – d.2003, for teaching me by example, and for his constant encouragement, eternal love, and unshakeable faith in me. I love you, Pop, and I hope I have made you proud.

“With goodwill, all things are possible.” – Thomas D. Lattanzio

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**Enclosure, Transformation, Emergence: Space and the  
Construction of Gender Roles in the Novels of Charlotte Brontë**

**Michelle Lattanzio**

**ABSTRACT**

I am interested in the construction and meaning of space in Charlotte Brontë's novels, and more specifically the idea of enclosure, in abstract and concrete terms. In a concrete sense, I wish to investigate the physical spaces the women in Charlotte Brontë's novels inhabit: their homes, gardens, workplaces, clothing, and their bodies. In an abstract sense, I wish to investigate the cultural, psychic, gender, and linguistic spaces they inhabit: the cultural images and conventions women are enclosed within, the psychic space of the mind, and the narrative spaces they inhabit (and create).

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, in their seminal text *The Madwoman in the Attic*, focus on the patriarchal enclosure of female characters in Victorian texts. As many Feminist critics of nineteenth century literature have noted (Vicinus, Agress, Auerbach), these enclosures are largely controlled by the patriarchy. Indeed, the

protagonists of Charlotte Brontë's novels reflect the entrapment of the feminine protagonists in a patriarchal world.

However, focus on this entrapment obscures the power that characters like Lucy Snowe, Jane Eyre, Shirley Keeldar, and Caroline Helstone generate from their enclosure experience. Each enclosure these three characters experiences fuels their education. Lucy, Jane, Shirley, and Caroline generate power and transformation of self from their time spent in these various enclosures. The education of these characters becomes the education for real women. In order to reclaim and reaffirm the value of enclosure for women, one may trace the positive notions of enclosure through the Jungian model of a three-stage gestation of women's rites of passage: enclosure, transformation, and emergence, as proposed by Bruce Lincoln. This gestational process results in psychological and spiritual transformation.

All four protagonists participate in many cycles of the gestational pattern on micro and macro levels. This process results in their eventual transformation and emergence as wise women. It is vital to re-interpret the psychic and physical enclosures within *Villette*, *Shirley* and *Jane Eyre* as spaces that shape the identity of Lucy Snowe, Caroline Helstone, Shirley Keeldar, and Jane Eyre.

## Introduction

I am interested in the construction and meaning of space in Charlotte Brontë's novels, and more specifically the idea of enclosure, in abstract and concrete terms. In a concrete sense, I wish to investigate the physical spaces the women in Charlotte Brontë's novels inhabit: their homes, gardens, workplaces, their clothing, and their bodies. In an abstract sense, I wish to investigate the cultural, psychic, gender, and linguistic spaces they inhabit: the cultural images and conventions women are enclosed within, the psychic space of the mind, and the narrative spaces they inhabit (and create).

Sandra R. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, in their seminal text *The Madwoman in the Attic*, focus on the patriarchal enclosure of female characters in Victorian texts. As many Feminist critics of nineteenth-century literature have noted (Vicinus, Agress, Auerbach), these enclosures are largely controlled by the patriarchy.<sup>i</sup> Speaking of Charlotte Brontë, Gilbert and Gubar note, "We would argue that this is the vision she worked out in most of her novels, a vision of an indeterminate, usually female figure (who has often come 'from the kitchen' or some such place') trapped – even buried – in the



architecture of a patriarchal society, and imagining, dreaming or actually devising escape routes past walls, lawns, antlers, to the glittering town outside" (313).<sup>ii</sup> Indeed, the protagonists of Charlotte Brontë's novels, as well as those of her sisters, Anne and Emily, reflect the entrapment of the feminine protagonists in a patriarchal world.

However, valid as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's study is, focus on this entrapment obscures the power that characters like Lucy Snowe, Jane Eyre, Caroline Helstone, and Shirley Keeldar, in *Villette*, *Jane Eyre*, and *Shirley* respectively generate from their enclosure experience. For women generally, narrative space must exist before the physical space. If a space for discourse on women's issues comes to exist in the worlds of art and letters, and a new life narrative takes form out of such discourse, the space then becomes part of the cultural milieu, leading to the creation of societal, physical space. The retreat of Charlotte Brontë's characters into freedom slips between the theoretical cracks. Lucy Snowe experiences enclosure within enclosure in *Villette*, layers upon layers: the pensionnat building, which is a former convent, encloses her, as do the roles of governess and teacher, along with images of the feminine and the gender conventions that shape such cultural enclosures. Jane shares some of Lucy's experiences as a governess and teacher and is enclosed in various houses along her journey. Caroline learns about the enclosures of

teacher and governess from Mrs. Pryor and Louis, respectively, and is enclosed in the Rectory with its attendant family graves surrounding the building. Shirley is enclosed in her manor house, Fieldhead, the Nunnwood, and in her liminal status between genders, as Captain Keeldar and the woman Shirley. Each enclosure these four characters experience fuels their education. Lucy, Jane, Caroline, and Shirley generate power and transformation of self from their time spent in these various enclosures. The education of these characters becomes the education for real women.

In order to reclaim and reaffirm the value of enclosure for women, one may trace the positive notions of enclosure through the Jungian model of a three-stage gestation of women's rites of passage: enclosure, transformation, and emergence.<sup>iii</sup> This gestational process results in psychological and spiritual transformation. Charlotte Brontë, working from a tradition of women writers before herself, establishes in her narratives conceptions of spaces for women that are outside of the traditional female enclosure, the domestic sphere of the "angel in the house." Charlotte Brontë, and women writers of this period and beyond, construct their lives as narrative, as art, in the enclosure of the narrative frame. This space is gestational, generative space, for in this artistic, imaginative space they are free to create the kind of life they want.

Charlotte Brontë and her characters Jane Eyre, Caroline Helstone, Shirley Keeldar, and Lucy Snowe construct their gendered lives in the narrative space, and so their narratives form part of a “usable past” for women in both Victorian and contemporary times (per Carol Flinders’ notion). *Jane Eyre*, *Shirley*, and *Villette* educate women about gender roles, in terms of how these roles are culturally constructed, and how to subvert those constructions to their own ends. In reconstructing their gender, in claiming for themselves both masculine and feminine gendered identities, they achieve psychic wholeness. In rewriting their gender roles in narrative, they are also re-ordering, re-writing, re-membering their psyches – for isn’t the psyche also text and space?

All four protagonists participate in many cycles of the gestational pattern on smaller scale, all of which contribute to the larger pattern, resulting in their eventual transformation and emergence as wise women. It is vital to re-interpret the psychic and physical enclosures within *Villette*, *Shirley*, and *Jane Eyre* as spaces that shape the identity of Lucy Snowe, Caroline Helstone, Shirley Keeldar, and Jane Eyre. Space no longer envelops these characters; they develop space, and from this development they reconfigure their selves. This pattern may be seen to operate on two levels, which intermesh and form one larger spiral pattern, macro and micro levels.

On the macro level, Lucy's journey in its entirety may be seen as a pattern of enclosure, transformation, and emergence. She begins her narrative enclosed in the familiarity of England, travels across the water to Belgium, where she is enclosed in the former convent-turned-school where she is transformed by her various experiences (including her new vocation as a teacher, her love for Graham Bretton and Monsieur Paul, and writing her life narrative) and finally she emerges as a woman who has achieved psychic wholeness and balanced sense of gender. However, Lucy participates in many cycles of this pattern on a smaller scale, all of which in some way contribute to the transformation and eventual emergence as a wise woman. One example of several of this pattern working on a smaller scale is her enclosure, transformation, and emergence in the school play for Madame Beck's fête. One may also look at her enclosure experiences in the garden alley as complete cyclic episodes unto themselves that, when taken all together, feed into the larger gestation pattern.

Jane Eyre, the protagonist of the text of the same name, is like Lucy Snowe in *Villette*, in that she seeks the same sense of belonging and centeredness that Lucy desires. Lucy is an inverse of Jane; in her cynicism, she allows herself to feel less. Jane's journey, like Lucy's, is one of education. Jane will be educated in many ways: in the ways of the world, similar to Anne Brontë's Agnes Grey, in the ways of love,

like Lucy, Shirley, and Caroline, in book-learning, in enduring the inevitable hurts and stings of life with grace, and in spiritual ways, also like Lucy, Shirley, and Caroline, as all four women learn to revere Nature as a spiritual teacher and a provider of divine sustenance.

Jane's journey, as are Caroline's, Shirley's, and Lucy's, is also one toward psychic wholeness. All three women will learn to balance their passion with reason and to learn to endure slights and wounds to their characters and emotional cores with grace and courage. Like Lucy, Jane must learn to balance these two opposing forces – but Lucy and Jane start from different places. Jane starts from an inborn orientation toward passion (note that her Uncle Eyre goes to Madeira, a hot place, to earn his fortune), and Lucy starts from a place of cold, of reason and chill observation.

Caroline begins her journey as a naïve young girl whose sheltered life in the Rectory has kept her from experiences that fuel emotional and intellectual maturation. Her Uncle, Mr. Helstone, has retarded her growth with his methodology of child-rearing, which amounts to emotional and intellectual neglect. In a prime example, he tells her to go forth and amuse herself and cease asking him questions about her future, to which she replies, "With what? My doll? (*Shirley* 191)." It will take the efforts of Shirley Keeldar, the matron of Fieldhead, Mrs. Pryor, Robert Moore, and others to expand her

conceptualizations of identity, femininity, love, and desire. Caroline is first introduced as a woman similar to the picture of Mr. Helstone's late wife hanging above the mantle. While Mrs. Helstone is beautiful of feature, she is bereft of spirit; her face is "passive," and Caroline says she was known as a "remarkably still, silent person" (221). Caroline, through the wisdom and experience gained in her enclosure experiences, will construct an identity independent of the Angel in the House, as represented by her Aunt's likeness.<sup>iv</sup>

Shirley Keeldar, unlike Caroline, bears no marked resemblance to Mary Cave, the deceased wife of Mr. Helstone referred to in the previous paragraph. As Mr. Helstone describes her to Caroline before Caroline's introduction at Fieldhead, Shirley is "a fine girl" with a "sprightly spirit" and there "nothing lackadaisical about her" (193). Indeed, Shirley is no Angel in the House; rather, she is the Captain in the house (200). Bestowed with a man's name, and as she notes, a man's position (200), Shirley is introduced as a strong woman of means and purpose, assuming her role at the helm of her manor house and its attendant businesses. However, Shirley must learn to reconcile and embrace the masculine and feminine aspects of her persona, a task that is accomplished by her education in matters of business and love in the course of the novel. Shirley speaks of her dual conscience, her divided self: Captain Keeldar, the public lord-of-the-

manor, and the private woman, who feels she has a “base alloy of cowardice” in her composition (264-265).

All four women are wild women in gestation, waiting to come in to their own power, their own ascendancies. These protagonists are learning to grasp and exercise power, and they both must learn the difference between power-over (which correlates with their upbringing) and power-from-within (which they learn after they develop their identities and values).<sup>v</sup> The three characters also learn when to exert each type of power – what situations call for which kind. Charlotte Brontë, in the process of inscribing her character’s journeys of self-education, educates real women, from the Victorian age to present day.<sup>vi</sup>

Jane, Caroline, Shirley, and Lucy undergo underworld journeys toward their psychic goals of unification of the shadow self and ego. Each woman must be broken down completely and then rebuilt on a stronger, wiser frame. Jane breaks down after her failed attempt at marriage with Rochester, a flaw of her judgment and his. This process makes sense as they are planning to build a life together, to be bone of bone and flesh of flesh – each must then be broken down and rebuilt, and Jane in part becomes the rebuilder of Rochester’s life and persona. Lucy breaks down in after spending the long summer in isolation in the pensionnat, after she tries to find God and herself in the Catholic Church and the sacrament of confession. In her failure to

find her identity in an extant way, she realizes that her values and concept of self must come from within, meaning that she must generate such things from her experiences. Caroline begins from a similar point to Jane, in that she is naïve and inexperienced in the ways of human relationships and must learn hard lessons through painful experiences.

Shirley turns ill, and attempts to hide her illness (of body and spirit) (497-499), brought on by a bite from a mad dog of the same name as the chapter, Phœbe. The chapter title and dog's name are significant as Phœbe in Greek mythology is a Titaness, the daughter of Uranus and Gaia, and grandmother of Apollo and Artemis (Farrar 261). The implied reference to Shirley as a Titaness recalls her visions of the Great Mother in chapter seven (319-321). In her illness, Shirley must reconcile the dual aspects of her persona and come to terms with her love for Louis Moore, her tutor.

Each female protagonist is ultimately in search of a home of some kind. In Jane's case, she is at home in Rochester's heart, though he must come to understand Jane before she may settle there: "Wherever you are is my home, my only home" (*Jane Eyre* 248). Jane will discover relatives into whose home she is welcomed, but she must eventually make her way back to her true home with Rochester at Ferndean. In Lucy's case, she searches endlessly for a home, in her



native country and abroad, in family and with strangers, and finally is granted one of her own by Paul. Caroline has a home in the rectory that she is not particularly "at home" in, as she is being raised by an uncle to whom she is not genially attached. Caroline is not at ease in the "windowed grave" of the Rectory (*Shirley* 399), but she feels at home in the Nunnwood and in garden spaces, enclosures where she is close to nature. However, we may notice in *Shirley* how the home of the woods, of Nature, is replaced in the end by a manmade, industrialist's dream of "home," paved over, sooty walkways, with spare homes lining the walk and the trees all gone. This patriarchal view of what constitutes home is much different from, say, Fieldhead, with its gardens and farmland, and its matron Shirley Keeldar's love of the woods.

Jane Eyre, Lucy Snowe, Shirley Keeldar, and Caroline Helstone are women involved in journeys to selfhood, an integrated identity arising from their enclosure experiences. Perhaps the character Shirley from the novel of the same name best sums up the goal of these women when she says she is "a woman, and something more" – she has a "touch of manhood" and feels that she can do a man's job (*Shirley* 198). The heroines must learn to achieve this gendered balance in their conceptualizations of identity, no mean feat in the Victorian milieu. For a period that is full of hope for the future

generally and exults in its many accomplishments, a period in which the body of knowledge on so many subjects expands vastly, gendered identity for women – and men – seemingly remains mired in traditional viewpoints, as reflected in the arts at that time. Charlotte Brontë's female protagonists forge new paths for women in their life narratives, opening up the gendered identities available to Victorian women and beyond, and for this reason it is imperative to explore in detail the modalities of these three texts.

## Chapter One: Enclosure

### **Physical Spaces: Domestic Space, Stage Space, Landscape, and the Body**

As are many other real women in her era, the characters Lucy Snowe, Caroline Helstone, Shirley Keeldar, and Jane Eyre find themselves enclosed physically, in geographical locales, in nature, in the domestic spaces of houses, garrets, and gardens, and on the space of the stage. The journal *Parabola's* issue "Home" (31:4) deals with "home" as a concept, and some of the material reflects the concept of "home" in Charlotte Brontë's novels, from the concept of being "at home" somewhere, to the physical body as home (as in the phrase "home is where the heart is") and home in a spiritual sense, particularly regarding the spaces of parish homes and churches. Such locations should function as spiritual homes for the congregation but are generally anything but homey. Nature always seems to offer a more fulfilling spiritual "home" to the protagonists in Charlotte Brontë's novels than Christian sanctuaries.

Indeed, the first two paragraphs of Lucy's narrative are concerned with space, the space of her godmother's home, both geographic and domestic. She indicates the rootedness of her godmother's family, "Bretton of Bretton," their connection to the land itself, the family name being one and the same with the ancient town of their many-years dwelling. There are, however, two worlds in *Villette* as a novel and also in *Villette*, the city. The English world is defined by its notions of propriety, and is proper and exacting, while the Continental world is one of intrigue, indulgence, and fluidity. The Bretton household is a microcosm of provincial England for Lucy, with its orderly furnishings and residents, neatness, and cleanliness, a distinctly Protestant place where "Sundays and holidays seemed always to abide" (3). The first chapter of the novel is titled "Bretton," further underscoring the story of Lucy as rooted in this time and place, in both a historical and cultural sense. The space of *Villette*, of the Continent, is a foreign world to Lucy in many ways, not the least of which is the Catholic underpinnings of the culture. Her first experience as she arrives off the boat is one of foreboding and confusion; the very air of the night seems to "rebuke" her for her "presumption" in being there, a stranger in a strange land, without even appropriate coin to tip her commissionaire upon arrival at an inn or any facility with the local tongue (52). Lucy's impressions of *Villette* in this introductory

chapter to her new home are full of disparaging comments that contrast sharply with her idealized English home: hotel floors are deemed unclean, the canals along her arduous journey are slimy like “half-torpid green snakes” and the men she encounters in her search for the Vilette inn are “plebian in soul” (53-57).

Eight years after leaving Bretton, upon the heels of her suffering the apparent loss of her kinsfolk and before she ventures to Belgium, Lucy is invited to enter the enclosure of Miss Marchmont’s home as her companion. Speaking to the meaning of this time and space, Helene Moglen notes in her text *Charlotte Brontë: The Self Conceived*:

Psychic withdrawal bound Brontë to her home and imprisoned her in the cavern beneath the sea: the tiny space which was the vestige of the surviving self—drowned yet still alive. Psychic withdrawal makes Lucy welcome the undemanding emotional life at Bretton and ultimately it causes her to accept, when it is offered, the position of companion to Miss Marchmont. Here too the dwarfed and stifled ego finds security in the narrow boundaries of claustrophobic space. (202)

Lucy has just endured a time of great troubles – a time of “cold, of danger, of contention,” which she contextualizes for the reader in the imagery of drowning souls upon a lost ship (31). As Moglen notes, “Lucy, like her creator, is a ‘survivor.’ Her identification is more with

the dead than with the living" (197). Moglen observes that Paul is a fellow survivor, too: "Paul has sacrificed everything...He too, has been a survivor – identifying with the dead. He has lived as a monk, in a space as limited as the one which enclosed Lucy and Miss Marchmont" (220). It seems that psychically Lucy is floundering, torn by her grief and her anger with her situation. Serving as a companion to a cripple is not appealing at all to Lucy. Her life will be reduced to, as she says, "To live here, in this close room, the watcher of suffering, sometimes, perhaps, the butt of temper, through all that was to come of my youth" (32). However, at this stage in her life she has little choice but to enter the enclosure of Miss Marchmont's home and learn the lessons inherent in being a "watcher of suffering."

Lucy is an itinerant wanderer by circumstance and not by personal habit. Left to her own devices, had Miss Marchmont lived on, she would have likely spent the years of life tending to her disabled matron. As her circumstances are, she has no family left to contact (so she thinks at this point), and must find her own way in the world, a perpetual outsider in search of a home and acceptance. She will find an eventual home, and acceptance of a kind, in Belgium through the hands of Providence and Mssr. Paul of the Pensionnat.

Lucy gravitates toward the garden at the Pensionnat, and it becomes a key enclosure for her transformation. The garden bears

some relationship to the original Garden – the Garden of Eden – in that Lucy will experience a coming-of-age in this space and will confront forces both good and evil in its realms. It is in the garden that she is enclosed and undergoes trials and trauma that lead to transformations in her person such as her meetings with Paul, Madame Beck, and the Nun. In the garden, Lucy will incubate and then bury certain dreams (her letters from Graham Bretton), from which she re-emerges with new self-knowledge and sharpened wisdom. Lucy finds a particular enclosure within the enclosure of the garden that comes to serve as her peculiar territory – the “l’allée défendue,” which in part forms the barrier between the girls’ and boys’ schools. She reclaims the allée défendue for herself from the mold and fungi, from the overgrowth, and makes this shady and narrow walk her own space (100-101). While here, she reflects on the moon and stars, as old friends from her childhood.

In the novel *Shirley*, the home of the woods, of Nature, is replaced in the end by a manmade, industrialist’s dream of “home” with paved, sooty walkways, spare homes lining the walk, and the trees all gone. Nunnely Woods, an enchanted place of old trees and woodland mosses, was said to be a haunt of Robin Hood, and the ruins of a nunnery are buried in the cup of a dell at the heart of the woods (212-215). The enclosure of Nunnely Woods, beloved by Caroline and

Shirley as a liminal space and a space that framed the land's history, is gone, its frame broken irrevocably by the mill owners.

Nature as a term has multiple meanings in these three novels; it may mean the natural world, or the nature of humankind, or may engender both meanings simultaneously. In *Shirley*, Caroline is haunted by the ghost of her father, in a psychic sense. He enclosed her in a garret as a child, on occasion even letting her go without food, and the last time she saw him he threatened to kill her as she was a burden to him (102-103). This sounds like a version of the Bluebeard tale. In her writing about the Bluebeard archetype, Clarissa Pinkola Estes notes that Bluebeard is a predator, one who seeks power over another, and manifests as an aspect of the psyche in men and women – a contra naturam, or “force against nature” (Estes 40). Reflecting the varied values of anchoritic spaces, Caroline tells Shirley of the graveyard that underlies parts of the Rectory, confesses that she dreams melancholy dreams sometimes, and that she rather longs to leave the confines of the Rectory (240). Graves lie under the kitchens, completing a circle of life and death, nourishment for and of the body and the soil. Caroline is rooted physically and psychically in this space, but her roots are growing stagnant; to branch out, literally and metaphorically, she must escape the space of the Rectory.



Kathleen Tillotson, in her article on *Jane Eyre* makes a key observation about Jane that applies to the other female protagonists as well:

A creature dependent, captive, yet with the liberty of adventure in imagination – a window to look out of, a book to read and pictures on which to build fancies. The double impression of constraint and freedom is burnt into the mind in those first few paragraphs; it is accompanied by the symbol (to become recurrent) of the window. (28)

In a passage reminiscent of the opening of *Jane Eyre*, Caroline is enclosed in a window-alcove, doing needlework (seemingly generative work that is forced charity work). She is like Jane Eyre in the opening of said novel, exchanging her needlework for the book (394). The attitude of the passage is similar, with its desolate, lifeless character. Jane's window seat and book, however imbued with cold, remote imagery, opens into a space that she can occupy in her imagination, a space that takes her away from her dismal life in the Reed home.

In *Jane Eyre*, Jane is as isolated at times as Shirley and Caroline are in *Shirley*, in enclosures that upon examination are as anchoritic in their construction and atmosphere as Lucy's, Shirley's, and Caroline's yet she does not associate her experiences with the monastic life. To

wit, the garden enclosure at Lowood is described as a “convent-like” garden, a place for the inmates to repair for pleasure and work (50-51).

The idea of the convent garden is a repeated theme in all three texts. In each instance, the “convent” garden space is a liminal space that frames significant experiences for each character. Frequently, these experiences are of a spiritual nature, blending elements of pagan and Christian themes. Jane is indeed religious, in a spiritual sense, but she is no nun, nor is she haunted by nuns real, historical, or imagined, as are Lucy and several characters from *Shirley*. Jane has a religion of her own, with one foot in the pagan world of nature and its spirits and one in the Christian tradition of her society and time. If Jane resembles any kind of female spiritual figure, it is a fairy, as her relationship to nature and the constructions of her by others in the text bear out.

As John Reed notes in *Victorian Conventions*, “In England, serious employment of fairy-tale devices served to unite esthetic and moral elements” (29). Reed elucidates how existing fairy tales function in Victorian literature. In the instance of Jane Eyre, this function is about the tale of how a fairy child comes of age and finds her fairy king in the process. Jane Eyre’s story is largely one of fantasy – there are many fantastic elements to the plot, and the idea of Jane as a fairy-human sort of changeling fits well into the overall fantasy.

However much of *Jane Eyre* is fantasy; there is real education for women in her story. Fantasy can and does inform reality. "Life, viewed as an imitation of Christ, an Aesop's tale, a Pilgrim's Progress, or a fairy tale, is still life shaped from the quarry of experience, still a 'making order in the chaos of impressions,' toward a moral end" (Reed 32).

*Jane Eyre* opens with Jane in the enclosure of the Reed household, similar to that of Lucy Snowe in the Bretton household. Jane notes that she does not like long walks in the outdoors – perhaps she is "too exposed" on such walks? Speaking of the opening scene in Gateshead, Maurianne Adams in her article "*Jane Eyre*: Women's Estate," says:

The curtain is a barrier which serves to protect Jane, to isolate her, and to reinforce her identification both with interior space (she daydreams over her book) and with the barren landscape on the other side of the uncurtained windowpane....It does not require great psychological insight to understand Jane's coping devices and their image-equivalents in the inner and outer landscapes of Jane's fantasy and social worlds. Jane's estrangement from social and familial life is imaged by her protective isolation from domestic interiors, while her spirit is constantly vigilant to search out spiritual affiliation in the outer

landscape – she meets both Helen Burns and Edward Rochester outdoors. (184)

Jane is enclosed, but she has a window on the world. She is in an enclosure that has windows of opportunity. Her connection to nature through the window will be her lifeline, both now and later. Jane will eventually look out the window at Lowood – the enclosure with windows of opportunity – and aspire to liberty. Throughout the novel, Jane retreats into enclosures to find her freedom.

Jane is “shrined in double retirement” in the window seat, with the red curtain drawn about her (9-10). She has carefully selected a book with pictures, repeating the image of a window into another world, a frame within a frame. She will escape into the world contained in the book of birds through the pictures. The glass of the window is “protecting” but not “sheltering” Jane from the cold day. As Jane studies the day through the glass, we can see that even as a small child she shows a propensity for analysis and an eagerness to understand things.

The image of the red curtain that separates Jane in the alcove from the Reed family has significance regarding Jane’s transformative journey. Red is the color associated with the Mother archetype in pagan mythology, and in the text it is accordingly a transformative color for Jane (Farrar 36). In the Red Room, a bed rests on raised

pillars, curtained with deep red curtains, like a "tabernacle." We are told the room is "chill," "silent," and "solemn" (14-15). This too, as noted by many critics, has all the earmarks of an initiatory rite (like a menstrual hut) (Figs 128). Helene Moglen, speaking from a Jungian point of view notes:

It is a womb-world from which she is born into a new state of being. Within it she is overwhelmed by the feelings and fantasies of the spirit-self. Catching sight of herself in the mirror she does, in fact, think that she has become an inhabitant of that other universe. She feels herself to be totally alienated from the living, thrust alone into a world of the dead and the supernatural. She loses her sense of the boundaries of her identity...Her fainting fit marks the end of the submission of her childhood and the beginning of a new stage of growth. (111)

We learn that Mr. Reed died in this room, consecrating it as a liminal place, and as Jane looks in the mirror at her reflection she sees an "imp," a "fairy" spirit looking back at her. Perhaps this is the "Mirror Stage" experience of Jane's development, where she learns to identify the "I" and "not-I" (Lacan, *Ecrits*, "The Mirror Stage").

Note that the windows in the red room are described as heavily festooned with draperies with the blinds always drawn (so the windows are sealed shut), forming almost a separate dimensional space from

the rest of the house. Speaking of the mirror image in the Red Room incident, Maurianne Adams states:

Jane has pulled inward, and withdrawn from a physical self occupying social and familial space at Gateshead, into a 'placeless' or status – and space-free spiritual and moral identity, occupying thin air. Jane withdraws into her imagination and her spiritual integrity, a process by which ego is reduced to its irreducible and invulnerable inner core. Withdrawal, however, is not to be understood as simply negative. Although the elfin and visionary mirror image also presents to Jane an image of terrifying supernaturalism, this effect is the pagan antecedent for Helen Burn's mystic and Christian anticipation of that happy day when the spirit would be freed from the fetters of the flesh. (186)

Expounding further upon Adams' point, one must note Jane is a true mystic, even though she doesn't necessarily identify herself as such, self-identifying as a Christian. She is in tune with the natural world – she observes the sunrises and sunsets, the storms and the winds, and is friendly with all ambassadors of Nature (dogs, horses, other animals, heavenly bodies such as the sun and moon and stars). It is interesting to note that Jane has an affinity with elements of the natural world from small to large, from Earth bound to Heavenly – a sign of her psychic maturity and growth in wisdom. Jane makes her

bed in the moors, is a friend to animals, is comforted by the weather, and looks to the heavenly bodies and the heavens themselves for answers and succor. Jane's final journey back to Rochester, her re-unification with her other half, is whispered on the winds, its discourse carried back and forth in this fashion. Jane may well call herself a witch, if she so chose – she has earned the title of "wise one" by novel's end.

The type of enclosure that suits Jane best is clearly nature itself. Jane is "at home" in the natural world. When at Thornfield, she describes the hills as providing an enclosure of "embrace" (102). Rochester, however, seems to recognize at the end Nature as Home as he takes to his mossy home in the woods.

Enclosures in the novels take on forms beyond domestic spaces and landscapes; one must also consider the enclosures of the body and mind. Lucy, Caroline, Shirley, and Jane are enclosed by, and enclose others, in their gaze. Speaking of Lucy Snowe, Kate Millett in her comments on *Villette* excerpted from *Sexual Politics* notes:

She is a pair of eyes watching society; weighing, ridiculing, judging...Lucy sees everything and reports, cynically, compassionately, truthfully, analytically. She is no one, because she lacks any trait that might render her visible: beauty, money, conformity. Only a superb mind imperfectly developed and a soul

so omnivorously large it casts every other character into the shadows, she is the great exception, the rest only the great mediocre rule. (256)

All four protagonists have keen powers of observation. They are also enclosed in the gaze of other characters, both corporeally present and present in spirit and image only. Through her detailed descriptions, Lucy shows the reader early on in the story that she has keen powers of observation. Many of the other characters are enclosed in her gaze, with Lucy offering commentary on their looks, motivations, and actions.

In an early example, Lucy observes the small child who invades the domestic peace of the Bretton home, Paulina Mary (Polly), with a wary eye. Lucy, clinging tightly to her construction of an emotionally cold, unflappable self, cannot abide the barely suppressed emotion of Polly grieving the absence of her father. Gazing down on Polly the night before she is bound for the Continent to reunite with her beloved father, Lucy considers how this tender-natured little creature will tolerate the "shocks and repulses, and humiliations and desolations, which books, and my own reason, tell me are prepared for all flesh?" (30). Lucy is keenly aware, even at a young age herself, through book knowledge and her reasoning from her observations of human experience, that life is constructed of pain and disappointment as much as it is peace and order. Speaking of Lucy, Helene Moglen comments:



It is not until she learns to trust her imagination as she must trust her feelings and intuitions that she can become 'reliable' as a narrator; 'whole' as a woman. In a remarkably contemporary way, the fiction strives for its form as the heroine searches out her identity. (200)

However aware Lucy is as a child of the nature of life, it is as an adult, as a Crone, that she is able to construct her narrative. Lucy is interested in observing people who are passionate and animated – such as Polly when she is around Graham. Otherwise she says she would not watch Polly (she would be uninteresting) (20). It is telling of her true nature, even so early on in the novel, that she is interested in observing passionate people. This will be part of Lucy's journey to psychic wholeness; she will have to learn to accept the emotional, passionate part of herself, the part which Paul notes in her countenance the first time he sees her, later in the novel. For now, though, this attitude of coolness serves Lucy well.

Paul, using his skill in physiognomy, is asked to translate the narrative inscribed on Lucy's face. As the reader shall see later in the novel, Lucy becomes equally adept at translating the expressions on Paul's face, also. Each of them shares a great skill in the power of observation. Paul is said to see through Lucy – she notes that a "veil would be no veil to him" (60). He diagnoses her nature, decides that

she has a bifurcated nature, of both good and evil, and that either way may prevail. Paul is the first person to notice these two forces in Lucy, and he is the only person to notice and comment upon these two forces in her throughout the rest of the novel.

From early in the novel, Lucy sees herself as a mere looker-on at life, and as such she can be seen frequently observing other people (131). As Robert A. Colby notes in his article "*Villette: The Life of the Mind*," "Lucy is really observing herself in the process of composing, creating characters and re-creating herself, and one understands therefore why she is so preoccupied with the workings of the mind and the imagination" (42-43). Lucy's gaze encloses all of the main characters in the novel at one point or other, and from her observations of others she picks up threads to weave into her own life narrative. Her observations are fruitful in guiding her path with regard to other people and herself. She finds out what makes them tick and how to handle them, as well as defining aspects of herself. Through the information she gleans from her observations, and her analysis of such, Lucy becomes much more than a mere looker-on at life. Such a concept of self remains part of her, but she has begun to grow beyond this limiting notion. As the reader will see later in the novel, she becomes, with Paul's help, the directress of her own school. A school directress is certainly a sort of enclosure, but Lucy makes the space a freedom.

Lucy, seeing her own reflection in a mirror as she contemplates her proposed life with Miss Marchmont, determines that her "blight" is external – that she still has life at her core (32). It is an important moment, as she appears in mourning clothes, still wrapped in the shroud of her grief; the image Lucy sees of herself is like that of a ghost, "a faded, hollowed-eyed vision," seemingly not far removed from the grave herself. Millet, in commenting on Lucy's mirror images, says "Born to a situation where she is subject to life-and-death judgments based on artificial standards of beauty, Lucy is subject to a compulsive mirror obsession, whereby each time she looks in the glass she denies her existence – she does not appear in the mirror" (262).

She recognizes the externality of the condition, however, and is aware of her own vitality buried under layers of suffering and grief. At this point in her life, Lucy herself knows much about suffering, perhaps, as she insinuates in the chapter's opening page, more so than other young women her own age. Lucy, as we have seen from the previous chapters, learns as much through observation as she does experience.

Observation in these novels encompasses much more than observing ones self or fellow humans; Nature is also a key entity for observation. In *Shirley*, we see that the sky functions as a portent of things to come (19). The curate, Malone, does not notice the omens in

the sky, and it is noted that he is not given to observing Nature closely. Indeed, this kind of observation seems to be gendered feminine in the novels, or is a representation of a feminine gendered image, such as in Robert Moore's vision of Eden, where he sees a "vision" that "glides across remote vistas"; though his reverie is cut short, we can rest assured his vision is Caroline (292).

We may see the import of the female gaze in many examples in the novel. Mrs. Pryor remarks on the picture of Mr. Helstone's late wife hanging above the mantle (221); while Mrs. Helstone is beautiful of feature, she is bereft of spirit; her face is "passive," and Caroline says she was known as a "remarkably still, silent person." As such, she is the Angel in the House, still watching over the domestic proceedings in her space. This image functions as a central tenet of Caroline's education, particularly as rendered by her Uncle. In the first meeting between Caroline and Uncle Helstone in chapter seven, in asking after her activities that day, he remands her to "stick to the needle—learn shirt-making and gown-making, and pie-crust-making, and you'll be a clever woman some day" (98-99). Four chapters later, in response to her request to become a governess, he calls such an idea a "feminine fancy" and tells her to "run away and amuse yourself," to which Caroline replies tellingly, "With what? My doll?" (191). According to her Uncle's view of life, "clever" women should toil in the domestic

universe, "amuse" themselves with something other than intelligent conversation, and certainly never yearn to perform work outside of their own home.

Regarding the Angel in the House, the conceptual image of woman as alternatively heavenly and demonic permeates all of the Brontë novels (Auerbach, *Woman and the Demon* 9). Robert sees Caroline as the Virgin Mary and tells her that his mother was a Roman Catholic (606). Litanies of the Virgin come to his mind, and he recites some of them to her in French (the Celestial Rose, the Queen of the Angels). Robert's twin, Louis, also sees his beloved in an angelic light. Louis compares the "utterance" of Shirley's eye, seen but not heard, to the language of Angels in heaven during the silent period (611). He also says her shoulders wear "a goddess-grace," and though he worships Nature he would prefer to behold her through a wife (616). Shirley combines the capricious spirit of the Fae with the classic beauty of the angel figure. Shirley and Caroline hide in a bower covered with hawthorns awaiting Moore's passage, bidding him to make them a proper good-bye; upon seeing them he pronounces them as fairies (315-316). Learning to reconcile these two metaphors of womanhood, the angel and the demon, is a key part of the work of reconciling aspects of the self, part of the education for all four female protagonists.

Gazing and looking are other venues for education in the novels. Upon spying on Fieldhead, Caroline sees Shirley and Robert Moore walking together and chatting (233-234). She considers them lovers, "happy spirits" not of this world in their union, and considers herself to be a "poor, doomed mortal" of this world, with no spirit, hiding in the darkness. Who is the watcher, and who is the watched? Caroline says that when she tries to observe Robert closely, she notices that he is watching her (275). Moore and Caroline meet up at the tea service, and Caroline once again feels the penetration of his gaze, described as though it were a daguerreotype imprinted by lightning (308). Gaze is always key in this relationship. Continuing the theme of looking/gazing, Caroline looks into Shirley's eyes to try to ascertain the secret of her eagle-eyed precision vision and looks to find Moore in Shirley's eyes (313).<sup>vii</sup>

Mirrors are key frames for discovery in the novels. WJT Mitchell in his article "Space, Ideology and Literary Representation" notes:

It is hardly surprising, then, that women's novels are obsessed not only with inner spaces of domestic architecture, the opportunities for psychic projection in the attics, and closets of Gothic mansions, but also with the paintings, mirrors, windows, and vistas that that open onto secondary, virtual spaces within these spaces. (98)

In an example from *Shirley*, Moore has a long discussion with Shirley, extracting from her the presumed cause of her illness (a bite from a mad dog; 517). He notes their image in the mirror, illuminated by firelight, and declares the difference between the two. The mirror as object is multifunctional in the novels, serving as a reflection of the present reality and also as a scrying tool. Robert puts himself in the place of a woman in the nineteenth century, looking to marry for money and not love (532-533). Even worse, he presumes that that is ok, as he believes Shirley loves him. Shirley sees through him, of course, and calls him on his presumptions. Robert says of Shirley, "Her words were a mirror in which I saw myself" (534). She reflects his language back to him, as a therapist does to a client.

Another parallel between Jane and Lucy is the issue of the gaze. Both girls are noted for their powers of observation, the way they watch people, and both have great powers of analysis and cunning attributed to them by way of their direct, penetrating gazes. Note that Jane is an observer of life as is Lucy Snowe. Jane is accused by John Reed of watching and plotting underhanded events (28). The preceding conversation among Mr. Brocklehurst, Mrs. Reed, and Jane is continued in the look Mrs. Reed gives Jane afterward, and it is this communication that fuels the impending showdown scene between

Jane and Mrs. Reed, wherein Jane utters her truths clearly for the first time (38-39).

As much as Jane, Lucy, Shirley, and Caroline are keen observers, they too are much under observation of one kind or another in the course of the novels. Dilating upon the issues of observation and spaces, and putting description ahead of narrative, from the opening sentence of the novel WJT Mitchell notes:

The possibility of action, understood as self-initiated movement in space, is continually undermined. In its place we find the representation of vision, of gazing, speculation, and observation, a tendency even more pronounced in *Villette*, where figures of espionage and surveillance govern the ubiquitous passages of description. If *Jane Eyre* is the heroine as painter, she is also the narrator as seer. (100)

Jane does prove to be a sort of seer, in that she can see clearly the essential nature of people upon meeting them, and the prophetic nature of her dreams and artworks. In *Jane Eyre*, Rochester is constantly watching Jane closely for clues to her essential nature. Upon her formal presentation to Mr. Rochester as his new hire, he examines her closely. He cannot tell her age for certain and has her play the piano and examines her artwork. He asks her, "Where did you



get your copies?" to which she replies, "out of my head." Her pictures come from her visions seen with her "spiritual eye" (127-128).

Jane and Rochester are in constant observation of each other, absorbed in each other's mysteries from the very beginning of their relationship. Jane reads Rochester's face and sees that the "organ" of benevolence is small. Rochester asks Jane if there is any hope of his transformation from "India-rubber" to flesh (134-135). From the start, Rochester sees in Jane a certain wisdom whose depths he is incited to plumb. Rochester reads Jane's mental replies in her countenance – he warns her that he can read the language of her eyes (138). In the guise of a Gypsy who has come to tell fortunes at Thornfield, Rochester reads Jane's face and hands (183-203). This idea of the eyes as windows to the soul is clearly a reflection of courtly love conventions, and indeed, Jane is an object of desire for Rochester that he cannot possess but may idolize; indeed, he later attempts to make an "idol" of Jane later in the novel, when he stubbornly insists on plying her with unwanted gifts (270-272).

Jane talks about how Rochester's features draw her feelings from her and fetter them in his (176-177). Jane considers herself akin to Rochester in terms of their nature if not wealth and class. Recalling the dual meaning of the word "nature" in the texts, she says it is a "blasphemy against nature" for her to consider otherwise. The germs

of Jane's love for Rochester are revived, and grow "green and strong"— she says "he is not of their kind;— I believe his is of mine." The plant imagery is significant, as it ties Rochester to Jane as a type of Green Man to his Fairy kin.<sup>viii</sup>

Jane has a psychic streak in her that is perhaps a legacy of her fairy blood. Her dreams are portents of things to come. Jane looks upon the veil that Rochester has bought for her – she discusses Rochester's thought-process in selecting it, and his responses to her objections, and he calls her a "witch" because she has read him well (283). Eerie winds blow as Jane dreams her first dream of barriers and division from Rochester of being burdened with a child and chasing after Rochester. In her second dream she envisions a ruined Thornfield, home to bats and owls. Jane wanders through the grass-grown enclosure still with the child, and she climbs the walls to glimpse Rochester in the distance, when she falls and loses the child.

Bertha penetrates Jane's bedroom and rends Jane's veil in two pieces. Jane sees Bertha looking in the mirror – Jane says Bertha looks like a vampire (a "foul German specter – the Vampyre"). Bertha comes up to Jane and stares at her face, mirroring the action of Jane looking in the mirror (285-286). Rochester has told Jane that when they have been married a year and a day he will tell her the truth of things. In pagan traditions, a handfasting may last for a year and a day. Also,

initiation into pagan traditions generally last for a year and a day. In effect, Rochester is proposing a Pagan marriage ritual to Jane.

Jane looks at herself in the mirror and sees a veiled/robed figure, enclosed in foreign garments and framed by the mirror; she doesn't recognize this figure as herself (289). Rochester calls Jane the "desire of his eyes" upon seeing her dressed this way – which further points up Rochester's interest in exteriors, with appearances and looking.

Jane gazes on neither "sky nor earth"; this is perhaps the first time she fails to note the weather, she fails to be in touch with nature; "my heart was with my eyes; and both seemed migrated into Mr. Rochester's frame" (290). She is utterly enclosed by Rochester's presence and desires. At the church, a place of worship, she finally notices something of the outdoors: the rook wheeling around the steeple and the graves and headstones.

St. John "reads it in her eye" that Jane will not be happy long at Morton (358). She will be in want, he feels, of human affection and company, that she is well devoted to such connections. He also speaks of his own restlessness and ambition – indeed, St. John starts at the very word, and proclaims that he is indeed ambitious.

The idea and dual meanings of the term "stage" is key to this study: a stage of life or growth, and a stage space for performance. These two meanings are merged in the texts, and the stage space

embodies temenos, the safe play space which Jane, Caroline, Shirley, and Lucy may respectively try out roles (gender roles, cultural roles, archetypal roles) to develop their identities.

While the environment created by the rugged landscape around the Haworth parsonage could be isolating in a negative way, it also functions as a positive space, a temenos, which provides a safe space for personal growth through the agency of writing. It is the same type of safe space that Charlotte's character Lucy seeks and carves out for herself in the "l'allée defendue" in *Villette*. Much of Lucy's journey, like Charlotte's, is involved with finding a safe physical and psychic space for herself, to write, dream, and experience life on her own terms. The Bretton home will always be a safe space of refuge and incubation to Lucy, now and later in the novel, when she is returned to the Bretton home after she breaks down in *Villette*.

Caroline is enclosed in her bedroom, alone with her thoughts (99-100). Note the mermaid mirror image, and Caroline's construction of self (Lacan? Mirror Stage? Otherness?). Robert B Heilman in his article "Charlotte Brontë, Reason and the Moon" notes the moon presides over the vision of the mermaid in *Shirley*:

The moon visions always partake of the revelatory – of human possibility or human actuality, or of the quality of mind of those who have the visions. When Charlotte wants to make a quick

plunge into the rare essence of a character, she instinctively demands the presence of the lunar muse. (40-41)

The narrator comments on the value of the moon for eighteen-year-old Caroline, as a benevolent light shining upon the Elf-land of this time and space: "What a moon we gaze on before that time! How the trembling of our hearts at her aspect bears witness to its unutterable beauty!" (97). Caroline is at a turning point, on the cusp of womanhood, and the mermaid image speaks to the transformation she is about to undergo as she leaves the fantastic Elf-land for the ever-perilous human world ahead. The moon figures prominently in *Jane Eyre* as well, as evidenced in the passage where Helen Burns tells Jane that she depends too much upon human love; that God's love in which we shall all reap the glory of at death, is what is most important. With regard to the meaning of the moon in *Jane Eyre*, Robert Heilman notes:

In *Jane Eyre* the moon is an aesthetic staple, at times a scenic element inherently charming to the writer, at times almost a character; at its most interesting it reveals an author groping for a cosmic symbolization of reality, or toward a reality beyond the confines of everyday actuality, toward an interplay or private consciousness and mysterious forces in the universe...In Jane's life every crucial event has its special lunar display...Always there is the suggestion of a transcendental force mildly at work. (41-42)

Notice that after Helen's speech, as Helen comforts Jane, the full moon shines upon her and Helen and Miss Temple comes for Jane, whereupon Jane and Helen feast with Miss Temple in her room (72-75).

When Shirley makes her first appearance, she enters Fieldhead through a glass door that leads to the enclosure of the garden (196). This is interesting, as we will find out later in this chapter ("Fieldhead") that Shirley is both male and female in character and sex. As she notes, "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..." (200). Gardens are amorphous spaces, embodying both male and female characteristics, and Shirley is also "natural" in many ways. Shirley is also involved in generative work, in her business capacities, and a garden is a space for growing things, a place where things are nurtured, a space in which she shall nurture Caroline.

Each house in *Jane Eyre* is a stage and each enclosure has its own meaning to the larger narrative. W.A. Craik, in her essay "The Shape of the Novel," comments on the value of places, particularly houses, in *Jane Eyre*. Of Gateshead, she comments that it is a place of "torment," "cold and dread" (7). She states that Lowood is "hard and repulsive" (8). Thornfield has three aspects: the landscape (defined as good); upper stories (defined as an evil space); and drawing rooms

(wherein resides "heartless and tasteless grand society") (9). Craik defines Moor House as "anxiety-inducing" but containing "Security and family unity" (10). Ferndean is "so unhealthy and gloomy a place" that it was unfit for Bertha to reside there (11).

Lowood may indeed be hard and repulsive, but as Jane notes, she wouldn't trade Lowood for Gateshead (77). Miss Temple marries and leaves Lowood, and Jane undergoes a "transforming process" that same day; with Miss Temple's presence removed, Jane feels her old emotions stir. She considers the courage it takes to go out into the world and experience life. If not liberty, which she desperately wishes for, then Jane asks for at least a "new servitude" – "liberty," "excitement," "enjoyment," all are not more than sounds for Jane at this time in her development (87-89).

Jane as narrator is conscious of the audience's presence, of enclosing the audience in their work; she will "draw up the curtain" as on a scene in a play and reveal the action to us (96). A few pages later, Jane, in her room at Thornfield, plays on the word "thorn," reflecting upon the transitory period and space she has entered (100-101).

The first meeting of Jane and Rochester is a momentous affair for both of them, in terms of shaping their individual and joint narratives. This is an important stage of her life, as this momentous meeting grounds her as one of the "fair folk" to Rochester, and

establishes him as one of same to Jane. Jane is more comfortable in this stage of landscapes than in the drawing rooms of Thornfield. Both daylight and moonlight illuminate Rochester for Jane's first full view of him – she notes that if he were handsome and young, and if he had replied to her ministrations with good humor and gaiety, she would have been put off of him (116). As he is, though, she is comfortable standing her ground. She is not afraid of walking in moonlight.

Jane says the incident was an active thing in an unbearably passive life. Rochester's face is not like the others in her memory gallery – it is masculine – so, his is evidently the first masculine face she admits to memory (118-119). Jane says returning to Thornfield is to return to stagnation. She does not want to return to this life and cannot appreciate the "privileges of security and ease" – to do so is to "slip again over my faculties the viewless fetters of a uniform and too still existence," like, she says, a man who has sat too long in an easy chair (118-119).

The charades games of chapter eighteen are key stages in *Jane Eyre* as these games illuminate the subtext of the current narrative. The staging of the charades involves costuming, and the traditional theatrical element of the raising of the curtain on the action. Richard Chase notes in his article "The Brontës: A Centennial Observance," "The aesthetic procedure of Charlotte Brontë makes her novel a series



of set pieces, tableaux, or great scenes which periodically resolve themselves out of the interspersed areas of formless activity (like the charades staged by Rochester and Blanche Ingram for his aristocratic guests)" (28). In Charade number one, Rochester and Ingram star as bride and groom (184). In Charade two, Rochester and Blanche Ingram don Oriental dress; he looks like an emir, she like an "Israelite princess" of the "patriarchal days" – "it was Eliezer and Rebecca: only the camels were wanting" (185). John R. Reed in his text *Victorian Conventions* offers this gender comment on Blanche Ingram in *Jane Eyre*, in Ingram's comparison of herself to Old Testament princesses: "Although they usually exhibit astounding beauty, it is really abrupt masculinity that characterizes these conventional types" (45). In Charade three, Bridewell, Rochester appears as a prisoner (with fettered wrists) (186). Blanche likes him best in this guise – she feels the rogue's look becomes him, that he would have made a gallant gentleman-highwayman. She would like a "hero of the road" – the next best thing to an Italian bandit – that former only surpassed by a Levantine pirate. In this desire for a Byronic-type here, Blanche is like the heroines of Charlotte and Branwell's Angria stories. It is interesting to note that the time of year is spring, as this is the traditional time of courtship, the growth of relationships, the rising of the sap, and the prelude to the mating season (mating starts on Beltane).

## **Cultural Spaces: Constructions of Class and Gender Roles**

There are two key elements in the Brontëan domestic space: enclosure and performance. The pattern of enclosure discussed in this study was not unknown to Charlotte Brontë, even though she lived well before Jungian analysts named the psychic phenomenon. Enclosed in the parsonage as a young girl, Charlotte Brontë would explore the depths of her imagination, along with that of her siblings, writing the Glass Town stories and eventually the Angrian story cycle. Brontë family life engendered performance. They acted out the stories at home, walked around the table, reading the texts aloud. The Brontës were keenly aware that life, and fiction, and gender, were all performative. As has been well noted by biographers and critics alike (such as Juliet Barker and Helene Moglen, among many others), the imaginative “world below” became a wellspring of inspiration, conscious and unconscious, for future memorable characters. In this enclosure, Charlotte’s life had some connection to the anchorites of the Middle Ages, in that her seclusion gave her the space, both physical and psychic, to write as she pleased and develop her ideas. Such privacy also gave her the freedom to develop her identity through the writing process and offered a certain protection from outside intrusions. As late as 1850, Charlotte mentions this “anchorite seclusion” in a letter to William Smith Williams, the reader for the

publishing firm of Smith, Elder and Co.: "I believe both '*Shirley*' and '*Jane Eyre*' are being a good deal read in the North just now – but I hear only fitful rumors from time to time – I ask nothing – and my life of anchorite seclusion shuts out all bearers of tidings" (qtd. in Blackburn 67).

Helene Moglen contextualizes the nature of feminine conflicts in *Shirley*:

By the time Brontë sat down to write *Shirley* she had so matured psychologically, artistically, and intellectually that she could place the psychosexual problems which had long concerned her within a larger social context ... The time had come for her to confront more directly the nature of female oppression and to consider as analytically as possible the way in which this form of oppression was related to others: to find the connections which could be drawn between women and the poor and socially dispossessed, between women and unemployed laborers, between women and children. (158)

Caroline says Robert treats the living workers in his factory as machines, without regard to their humanity (72). It may also be said that men treat woman as objects without regard to their humanity. Some men, like Caroline's Uncle, Mr. Helstone, hold that women are lesser creatures, unable to participate fully in life the way a man can,

and moreover are capricious creatures whose whims can never be understood (and so no man should try). Lucy, Caroline, Shirley, and Jane find themselves to be enclosed culturally, such as in the prevailing images of the angel in the house or the spinster, and socially in terms of their social status and roles, such as the governess, heiress, and teacher.

In the description of Mary Cave, Mr. Helstone's wife, there is the dual image of the Madonna and Angel (52-53). She fades away in death, quietly, unloved, and unnoticed by her husband. Commenting on Mary Cave, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, in their seminal text *Madwoman in the Attic*, state:

Even the noblest patriarchs are obsessed with delusive and contradictory images of women, Brontë implies, images pernicious enough to cause Mary Cave's death. She is therefore an emblem, a warning that the fate of women inhabiting a male-controlled society involves suicidal self-renunciation. (376)

In a succinct comment, Helene Moglen notes "Mary Cave had found physical death preferable to the spiritual death of her marriage" (165). The true nature of Yorke's and Helstone's antipathy to each other is rooted in their rivalry for Mary, a battle that Helstone won. It is worth noting that Yorke goes on to marry a woman that is the opposite of Mary Cave. The description of Caroline Helstone later in the same

chapter reflects some of the same qualities of Mary Cave (66-67). She is quiet, in the way that Mary Cave was, perhaps, but with something different – a spark of independence and intelligence that cannot be completely subdued.

Several chapters later, the narrator provides a description of the second female protagonist of the novel who bears its name, *Shirley*: she is given a masculine name, per her parents' desire for a son, but looks distinctly feminine, with dark hair, good height and well-defined features.<sup>ix</sup> Shirley says she is "a woman, and something more" – she has a "touch of manhood" and feels that she can do a man's job.<sup>x</sup> She cleverly notes that women shouldn't have political or religious opinions, yet she banters with Helstone on just those subjects. Speaking of the creation of Shirley as a character, Moglen notes that Shirley's "external circumstances and personal qualities suggest alternative possibilities for a woman's acquisition and use of power and thus for her realization of self...But she is, after all, a woman—and this qualifies the rest" (175). Shirley gives Helstone a nosegay, and he refers to her by a masculine pronoun to her governess, Mrs. Pryor; he calls her a captain, a squire and uses the title Mister, and as the chapter closes we see her hand in waving farewell referred to as "white as a lily and fine as a fairy's" (202-203).

Jean Wyatt, in her article "A Patriarch of One's Own: *Jane Eyre* and Romantic Love" observes:

Jane's angry response to all attempts to define her as a subordinate is one of defiant autonomy: 'I am not an angel...I will be myself.' Jane's repeated refusals to be contained within gender categories can inspire her reader with a similar determination to make the fantasy of autonomy a reality in her own life. (206)

Jane is not an "Angel in the House"; rather, she is the Fairy in the House. The differences between these concepts are many: religious affiliations, agency, temporal (dis)placement, power. Lucy is no Angel either; she is a shade, an inoffensive shadow, a ghost. Caroline is sometimes constructed as a spectral figure in *Shirley*. The implications of these constructions of identity are important. As a ghostly entity, Lucy is freed from the body and the restrictions that are placed upon the female body. The borders are dissolved, and her body, like Jane's fairy body, becomes a liminal space, a liminal text.

The second paragraph of *Villette* focuses on the order inherent in the Bretton home; the orderliness and peace of the home, "where Sundays and holidays seemed always to abide," suit her well (3). It is like a fairy godmother's home in a fairy tale, the ultimate safe space for a young person's imaginative pursuits.

In keeping with the notion of her body as her casket, for Madame Beck's fête, Lucy chooses to wear a gown of purple grey – the color of the dun-mist on the moors. The gown, in terms of its color and associations, is a gown of shadow. Karen Lawrence, in her article "The Cypher: Disclosure and Reticence in *Villette*," makes some interesting observations about Lucy's specific choices in attire:

In assigning herself a figure like the cipher, Lucy deliberately obscures her intelligibility, her body, and her signature...But in articulating herself with a figure that covers, Lucy causes us to wonder if invisibility is not also a strategy like the 'cloak of hodden grey,' specifically a strategy to avoid being 'textualized' or read. (307)

Indeed, Lucy says of her grey dress, "In this same gown of shadow, I felt at home and at ease; an advantage I should not have enjoyed in anything more brilliant or striking" (122). It is interesting that Lucy chances to meet Madame Beck, the ultimate invisible snoop, before the fête, and Madame approves of Lucy's dress as "decent." It is important to note the enclosure of her dress, for it is an indicator that she deals with her shadow self externally then internally, at this point in her narrative. Some days before Madame Beck's fête (as Lucy notes, it is summertime), Lucy contemplates the city of Villette from

her balcony, and says of herself that she is "living my own life in my own still shadow world" (109).

Caroline, enclosed in her room, sees her image outlined on the wall – a pale phantom (172-173). In her mind, she sees the freedom and joy she and Robert experienced in nature, in the enclosure of the woods, and she contrasts it with her present state of affairs.

In her dreams, Caroline meets the memory of Robert and accompanies him like a spirit. In the moonlight, her spirit is fresh and lively, but in the "reality" of the daylight she turns wretched and dejected (258-259). Caroline lives in her imagination and memory as a specter.

Mrs. Pryor explains to Caroline that she gave her over to Mr. Helstone to raise, because of the picture of the girl shown to her: a fine, fair, fairy-like being that Mrs. Pryor was certain contained a malicious heart, as the beauty of her husband had contained within (437). There is an idea of the changeling here in the fairy reference.

Shirley calls Louis a "great dark goblin" who meets her "in the moonlight" and gives such reason for her apparent fear of him. Of her, he says she is "spirit-like," "a thing made of an element," "the child of a breeze and a flame," "the daughter of ray and rain-drop" (630).

Perhaps this is her fey nature which he describes in these elemental terms and alchemical references.



If we consider Jane as part of the fairy folk, two concepts become important. Firstly, the idea of her story as a fairy tale takes on additional meaning – on one hand, it is structured like a classic fairy tale, folklore, and on the other is a real “fairy’s tale,” narrated by the changeling child grown into an adult woman, married to man who is like a “brownie.” Rochester notes that Jane has the look of “another world” – he says upon seeing her the night before he thought of fairy tales and considered that she had bewitched his horse – was she waiting for “her people” upon the stile, he asks? The “men in green”? Did he break through one of her “rings,” a fairy ring? Jane says that the fairy folk have all left England for a hundred years past (125).

Helen Burns teaches Jane about the spiritual world – Helen is ethereal herself and doesn’t seem to be of this world. No one could be as “good” as Helen Burns.

As Barbara Walker notes in her text, *The Woman’s Dictionary of Symbols and Sacred Objects*, “‘Elf’ used to be another name for an ancestral ghost, especially a pagan spirit from pre-Christian times” (245). “Man...can be seduced by an elvish woman; but then he became elwetrtsch, elvish, eldritch. This happened to...many medieval heroes” (245). Also, J. R. Clark Hall, in *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, states that Ylfe (spelling for elf) – ælf (another way to spell it) is a gendered male noun that means “elf,” “sprite,” “fairy,” “goblin” and

"incubus" (8). According to Hall's etymology, a nightmare is an "ælfæel," a dream of fairies. Rochester and his wife are estranged – æl-fremed – elf-framed, which mean strange, foreign, estranged and free and separated-from (if you add the "ung" ending to it to have alienation). Lucy and Bertha have something in common on this point: both are strangers in another country. Jane, too, fits this paradigm of a stranger in a strange land through her liminal state as fairy and governess. Further, it is interesting that the term for "elf" is a male gendered noun as it is applied here to females, all of whom assume male gendered traits in the novels.

Jane sees Rochester in the garden, writing. She says, "He is not a ghost" yet her "nerves are unstrung" (246-247). The meaning of the word "ghost" is of particular interest, as Jane is applying such a term to Rochester instead of the other way around. Upon approaching him, she says she has a veil, and that it is down – she shall endeavor to hide her feelings from him. He says of her that she steals into the house at twilight like a "dream" or a "shade." Jane proclaims that she has come from the attending her Aunt, who is dead. Rochester says of Jane:

She comes from the other world – from the abode of people who are dead; and tells me so when she meets me alone here in the gloaming! If I dared I'd touch you to see if you are substance or

shadow, you elf! – but I'd as soon offer to take hold of a blue ignis fatuus light in a marsh. (249)

It is interesting, at this juncture, to note the meaning of the term "ignis fatuus" – it means "a will'o the wisp, or sprite." He goes on, accusing Jane of having second sight and speaking of the carriage for the new Mrs. Rochester – "Tell me, now, fairy as you are, – can't you give me a charm, or a philter, or something of that sort, to make me a handsome man?" Jane says to him, "It would be past the power of magic, sir." It is Midsummer Eve, the night of the faeries and of love, consummated and sacred marriage, and the night of Jane and Rochester's talk in the garden that ends in his proposal (one recalls the elf in the Hawthorne tree earlier, and Jane's painting at Gateshead) (249).

Rochester continually refers to Jane as a fairy and asks Jane more than once whether she is indeed a human being. Jane refers to him as a brownie, with his shaggy black mane. He calls her a "mocking changeling-fairy-born and human-bred!" (440-441). Rochester calls Jane his "skylark" and says to Jane that he had heard "one of your kind" singing in the wood (442).

Gender roles are performed, and the performance is in the text, and also in the construction of the text. Gender roles emerge early in *Villette*, as Polly, working at domestic tasks when she is six years old

is described by Lucy as "silent, diligent, absorbed, and womanly" (13). A woman's place is indeed in the home, toiling away at domestic tasks, while intellectual labor is left to the Mr. Homes (scientist) and Graham Brettons (schoolboy following in the footsteps of his deceased father, a physician) of this fictional world, reflective of the real world of Charlotte Brontë's Victorian England.

Lucy reconfigures her cultural space, her identity as constructed by her gender, when something or someone goads her into action. She always needs an impetus to get her started on rewriting her narrative. Speaking of her willingness to stay on with Miss Marchmont as long as she might live, Lucy notes "it seemed that I must be stimulated into action, I must be goaded, driven, stung, forced to energy" (34). Speaking specifically of the "goadings" from Madame Beck, Helene Moglen notes, "Regarding the young woman as one of those 'Anglaises,' who will dare anything, Madame Beck continually challenges Lucy to assume roles which express her capacity for leadership, which evoke her Protestant 'individualism,' her fierce integrity, her pride" (206).

Lucy's impulses come from various forms of prodding, such as her nearly destitute situation after Miss Marchmont dies, Madame Beck's forcing her to become a teacher, Paul forcing her to act in the school play, her spiritual/mental crisis in the confessional, the

drugging that leads her into the streets of Villette, and her passion for first Graham Bretton/Dr. John, and then for Monsieur Paul.

In the world of Villette, the city, Lucy engenders a different type of the female gender. To both French and English people in the city of Villette, she is no angel in the house. Her independent, solitary temperament is poorly suited to the demands of such a limited gender construction. In many ways, then, Lucy's gender is much more traditionally male than the other women – even to her taste in clothing, which is somber and simple. She is not afraid of hard, honest work, including work with her hands, and needs no man to keep her financially. A lady of the nineteenth century does not work with her hands. Such an activity is not part of the lady's gender construction. However, Lucy does active, generative work with her hands, as Miss Marchmont's companion (3-34), as a governess to Madame Beck's children (65-72), and taking care of the cretin during the chapter "The Long Vacation," a job that was originally to be done by a servant (146). Such generative work may be read as a signifier of masculinity.

Lucy's gender construction is further problematized after her arrival in Villette. She reflects on how people have sized her up on her journey thus far, in terms of how she is defined by her gender, class and dress. Falling into a philosophizing mood, another inherently masculine act, she notes that servants and stewardesses "in a

moment's calculation, estimated me at the same fractional value" (53). Lucy is conscious of their construction of her, and she multiplies their fractional value of her when she tips them well for their services. She will not disguise from herself what such a recurrent situation indicated (i.e., her impoverished state), but later she comes to, if not embrace, at least reconcile herself to her status. Lucy is a stranger in a strange land, subject to misreading by the natives, such as is Bertha, Rochester's wife.

Lucy, who is assigned the task of governess to Madame Beck's children, soon finds herself facing a new situation. Madame Beck assumes the position of the goading force that impels Lucy to act when she insists upon her taking the place of the missing English teacher (71). Lucy is struck by Madame Beck's power in this episode, which Lucy defines as a man's power. Lucy sees in Madame Beck's countenance that she wears "not a woman's aspect but a man's" (71). Lucy notes that such power is not her kind of power, and she feels acutely the cowardliness of her instinct to give herself over to inertia. Brenda R. Silver in her article "The Reflecting Reader in *Villette*" comments on the importance of this scene for women's narratives in her following commentary:

She justifies to the reader her major decision to go forward into the classroom (rather than backward into the nursery) as a

reaction to what she describes as Madame Beck's masculine challenge to her gifts. A closer look, however, reveals that through this 'justification' she transforms what appears to be an arbitrary personal choice into an assertion of female selfhood broad enough to include intellectual ambition and achievement. She creates, that is, a plausible social and narrative context for her own self-development that in turn opens the way for other women to follow her. (293)

The power that Madame Beck exerts here is akin to what Starhawk in her text *Dreaming the Dark*, calls "power-over," which is an inherently patriarchal/masculine type of power.<sup>xi</sup> Kate Millet comments on Madame Beck as patriarchal collaborator: "Madame Beck is a perpetual policewoman, a virtual forewoman of patriarchal society. No system of subjection could operate for two seconds without its collaborators, and Beck is a splendid example of the breed" (259). Lucy establishes this type of patriarchal force over Madame Beck, in her only real confrontation with the directress, which involves Monsieur Paul (420).

Through the process of writing her life narrative, generated by her enclosure experiences, Lucy will eventually develop a different type of power, a power-from-within, which is a type of power that Starhawk defines as "the power of the low, the dark, the earth; the

power that arises from our blood, our lives, and our passionate desire for each other's living flesh" (4).

In the attic enclosure, Lucy learns/creates the part of the fop and performs for an audience of rats and roaches, fellow shadow dwellers. In this space, she experiences a transformation, the key aspect of which comes to light when she prepares to go onstage. Referring to her theatrical act, Brenda Silver says, "The self-respect implicit in her refusal to dress completely as a man for the role – to deny her femaleness – demands that her search for identity and fulfillment occurs on a different stage" (295). Silver goes on to elaborate on the nexus of gender and narrative in the play scene:

Although Lucy rejects living by proxy (Ginerva's way) and refuses to perform before an audience of strangers, the play does allow her to test her powers and find her voice, and experience that informs her ongoing dialogue with her chosen audience, the reader. 'Who will lend me a tongue?' she asks near the end of her tale, knowing only too well that she can rely on no one but herself...The complexity of her relationship with her readers and the changing roles she assigns to them as the narrative progresses reflect in turn the difficulty of growing to selfhood amidst the contradictory needs and desires imposed upon her by the prevailing cultural codes. (295-296)



Lucy gives way to her passionate nature in this theatrical episode. Paul has seen her *moyens*, her resources, and he assures her that she has what it takes.<sup>xii</sup> Lucy only agrees to play a man so long as she may assume the garb in her own way, which is a mix of men's and women's clothing. She plays the part of the fop as a rival to Dr. John, and in doing so repositions herself in the gendered space. Lucy notes, "where he was outcast I could please," and so she plays up to Ginevra and makes the rôle her own (131). Lucy decides the next day that she may not do such a thing again, and writes that the lock remains unpicked (131). However, we notice that after her acting routine, she gets into a heated discussion about Ginevra and de Hamal with Dr. John – and with a sharp tongue and wit she turns Dr. John's rhetoric back on him (139-140).

The primary episode wherein Lucy gives herself over to her passion and will is in the pensionnat theatre scene. Lucy gives way to her imagination in the way she recreates the rôle of the fop. It is significant that the fop character is described as a "butterfly, talker and a traitor," as this role is transformational for Lucy (125). Enclosed in the rôle, in the blended costume of a man and woman that she insists upon wearing, Lucy is transformed by the experience. She stages her passion in the play. After the play her passionate nature goes offstage, packed back into her psychic trunk as a costume, back

into the shadows. She returns to being a mere looker-on at life. There is a connection in terms of character development between Jane and Lucy on this point; formerly, Jane has been a spectator at Lowood and she now has to become an actor (55).

Caroline shows the strength of her intellect in her analysis of Cowper and Rousseau. In response to Shirley's questioning, she notes that the observations are hers alone, not taught her by Robert (228-230). Caroline and Shirley discuss the nature of work for women, and both show a desire for generative work. Earlier in the novel, Caroline wishes that Nature had made her a boy, so she could work with Robert in the counting-house, rather than sit at womanly tasks with Hortense in the parlor (77). Caroline had also expressed a wish for work while speaking with Robert previously. Shirley notes that such work is said to be too masculine for a woman, in that it makes a woman "coarse" (228-230).

Shirley sounds like Hedda Gabler, as she asserts that she has pistols and can use them (262). Shirley speaks of her dual conscience, her divided self: Captain Keeldar, the public lord-of-the-manor, and the private woman, who feels she has a "base alloy of cowardice" in her composition (264-265). In the business of the distribution of the funds to the poor, Shirley insists Helstone see her as Captain Keeldar (272). At chapter's end, Shirley as host is referred to as Captain Keeldar, the male host (274). Later on, Shirley is again a captain, but

this time in a militaristic sense, inspired by the band music to dream of going into battle to defend something beloved (302). Shirley and Hedda, as characters, share a desire to embody masculine gendered traits and a sense that their wealth and status will open up possibilities for them. However, as Helene Moglen notes, “‘When it comes to the point’ Shirley’s position does not isolate her less than other women in her relationships with men. Her wealth and status don’t make her their equal. They make her more valuable; a prize worth winning: a trophy worth exhibiting” (177). Indeed, Robert thinks of Shirley as a trophy to be won and coveted, just as Tesman makes an idol of Hedda Gabler.

## **Narrative Space: Identity and the Künstlerroman**

Caroline, Lucy, Shirley, and Jane construct their life narratives in the time and space of the novels, and they then rewrite them in their narration years later. As Brenda R. Silver notes:

Rather than misleading or lying to us, or to herself, Lucy is deliberately creating not only a new form of fiction for women, but a new audience – part critic, part confidante, part sounding board – whose willingness to enter her world and interpret her text will provide the recognition denied to women who do not follow traditional paths of development. (289)

For women, the narrative space must exist before the physical or cultural space, and Lucy as well as Jane directly invite the reader to bear witness to their narratives. The freedom that Lucy, Caroline, Shirley, and Jane experience later in life evolves from their inscribed narratives, their linguistic enclosures.

Lucy does not insist on personal significance at first – she is defined relationally, by Miss Marchmont, for example. In small and large ways, Lucy begins to insist on personal significance. Helene Moglen notes:

In a new situation, assigned different roles by the teachers and students at Madam Beck's Pensionnat, Lucy finds that instead of being deprived of an identity she has protected with such

difficulty, she can define herself in a number of different ways, playing a variety of roles, responding to other people's expectations of her. (205)

Lucy shifts her ground later in the novel, where she insists on personal significance, or a statement of Ego, per Barbara Gelpi's concept in *Victorian Women*.<sup>xiii</sup> This relational identity persists later in the novel as well, in such incidents as her discussion with Monsieur Paul over the execution of the pensionnat theater piece for Madame Beck's fête, and Lucy's "rencontre," her skirmish, with Madame Beck.

Lucy continues to construct her life narrative, in the time and space of the novel, and then rewrites it in her narration years later. At the time of the novel's narrative, Lucy notes that she is writing this now with hair described as "white under a white cap, like snow beneath snow" (40). Lucy consciously constructs her identity in her psychic narratives, as in the ongoing battles between her Reason and Imagination, as well as the other abstract concepts that do battle in her mind and soul. Lucy says she lives two lives, one of thought and one of reality, and notes that as long as the life of thought is fed on fancy, the life of reality can live on daily bread, work and shelter (70). She constructs herself in the fantasy narratives she imagines and projects. Lucy's narrative renames her and places her in a narrative context. In this respect, then, Lucy is creating the narrative space that must exist before the physical or cultural space.

Lucy's freedom is a state of mind that evolves from her inscribed narrative, her linguistic enclosure.

It is through the agency of language, Lucy's foreign tongue, by which Madame Beck grants her access to the Pensionnat (60). After telling Madame Beck her tale and asking her for employment, Lucy is introduced to the person who will come to shape her narrative, and her psychic development, in remarkable ways – Monsieur Paul.

Monsieur Paul constantly notes that Lucy must be kept down, because he sees exorbitant fire and passion in her nature that can become destructive if it is given free reign. However, Lucy does a fine job of keeping herself down on her own. She is always chastising herself for thinking up plans and dreaming of new narrative twists for her life story. She is always keeping herself in check with the battles between Reason and Imagination, food, dress, and her intellect. It is infrequent that she gives herself free rein in any way.

Caroline gets a stern lesson on wisdom and submitting to the pains of experience when she encounters Robert at the cottage and he is cold to her. Arnold Shapiro, in "Public Themes and Private Lives: Social Criticism in *Shirley*," says of Caroline's condition:

Caroline is the victim of a society which gives her nothing to do – since she is 'respectable' – and has no understanding of her needs. She is the victim of this world where selfish men

dominate and 'feeling' is ignored. She is the victim – again because she is respectable – of a world where she cannot speak out and express her love freely. In Caroline's story, therefore, the social and private themes of Shirley again coalesce. (228)

The lesson imparted by the narrator is one of cruel stoicism, and it is said that this is the fate of women to endure, as men could give voice to their concerns and demand answers (105-107).

Shirley, as Captain Keeldar, offers to take Caroline away to the Scottish Islands, to see seals, sea-birds, and mermaids. Caroline says she has longed to hear the sound of waves (does it call to her as a mermaid?) (244). Shirley narrates a fantasy encounter with a mermaid, in August under the Harvest Moon, off the deck of a ship. She says as women, she and Caroline can resist the enchantress, and calls the mermaid a "monstrous likeness of ourselves!" (246).

Shirley delivers a tirade on the role of women as wives, and insists that she will NOT set herself the task of "improving a husband" (619). Sandra Gibert and Susan Gubar comment on the status of women in *Shirley*: "The foods and fictions that sustain men are precisely those that have contributed to the sickening of women" (374). The idea of such a relationship, the part of the role of the Angel in the House, to serve as a moral ideal for her husband, is abhorrent

to Shirley. Indeed, Shirley adds at the end of her outburst, "I shall insist on my husband improving me, or lest we part" (619).

Jane, like Lucy, is engaged in writing her life narrative, constructing it with great care and precision. Whom she allows to speak, and how she allows them to speak are points to be noticed. Jane is open with the telling of her tale – one does not get the sense that she is holding back many things, or is told so overtly by her narrator, as one is with Lucy Snowe's narrative. The title page of *Jane Eyre* indicates that Jane's story is an autobiography, and though we have no such note in *Villette*, we do have Lucy's statement that she is writing her tale in retrospect, with hair that is "white under a white cap," indicating that this is the story of her life, even if it is not identified specifically as an autobiography (40). Jane seems to be a trustworthy narrator, and she develops a warm rapport with her reader. Lucy seems to keep her reader at arm's length. Both women have certain cutting senses of sarcasm that arises at points, and occasionally edgy senses of humor (Lucy more so on this point, with her catty remarks). Jane almost always seems to be writing from a place of honesty, and of warmth and fairness towards her cast of characters. Lucy narrates her tale with a sense of reluctance and a sense of anger, almost, for days gone by and hurts and slights long since inflicted and passed over.



Jane's paintings are keys to her narrative, which are almost always surrealistic and not particularly representative. For Jane, her artworks are part of the way in which she frames her experience, frames her narrative. WJT Mitchell, in commenting on women and literary space notes: "Gilbert and Gubar (1979: 7) ask the question, 'If the pen is a metaphorical penis, with what organ can females generate texts?' I suggest that for many women, the answer is a paintbrush" (98). This proves to be an accurate statement on the part of Jane, as she constructs her narrative through her artwork as much as she does through her written narrative. Robert Colby notes, "In this respect *Villette* can be contrasted with *Jane Eyre*. Where Lucy's impulse is to take up the pen, Jane's is to reach for the crayon" (43). It is interesting to note the substance of Jane's pictures, the images/symbolism: one painting is of a woman's bust as the evening star embodied, ascending – and her next one is of a desolate king. Her pictures recall superstition and myth, and comment on the status of women and men within the frame of society. Jane created these works on a midsummer vacation and traditionally midsummer is associated with the fairy world and their powers. Rochester says the paintings have "elfish" touches (128-129).

Jane connects the experience of reading the picture book, and constructing some kind of narrative out of the series of arctic pictures,

with the stories that Bessie would share with her, adventures of fairy tales, ballads and scenes cribbed from Gothic novels like *Pamela*.<sup>xiv</sup> This is significant, as Jane's tale is a "fairy tale," in that is the tale of a fairy's life (Jane is often described as a fairy, a "charmed" girl). If one considers Jane as a living fairy, then her connection to the outside world, the moon and the heavens, and the stunning series of the events of her life make more sense. A fantastic creature should indeed live a fantastic life.

Jane is a Wild Woman and her quest is to develop her wild self. Jane says the Reed children are "not fit to associate with her," and she challenges Mrs. Reed next, saying the utterance seems to leave her lips without her thought or consent (29-30). It is as though something is speaking through her (which, of course, it is – it is her spirit addressing Mrs. Reed, as will happen again later with Rochester). Upon reflection Jane sees the "dreariness" of her "hated and hating" position. Jane tries to comfort herself with a book of Arabian tales, and as she notes the winter frost on the ground outside, she wanders to the gates, wondering, "What shall I do?" She is at a crossroads of sorts, a threshold, which is a common motif in this story (40). Bessie notes that Jane has "quite a new way of talking" – but Jane knows enough to remain silent on the point of her talk with Mrs. Reed (42). It

is an interesting comment from Bessie, as Jane learns her narrative skills from Bessie.

Awful as the overall Lowood experience is, Jane takes to learning and the first drawing she produces is of a cottage (dreaming of her own space, a room of her own) (77). She notes that she wouldn't trade Lowood for Gateshead. Jane says of herself that she likes to "analyze" and "question," and at least here there is a space for her to learn (80).

Jane still longs for liberty – her wanderlust is alive, even at Thornfield, as though she has gypsy blood in her (112). We also see Jane's imagination at work: "Best of all, to open my inward ear to a tale that was never ended – a tale my imagination created, and narrated continuously" (112). Commenting on the meaning of the upper regions of Thornfield, Adrienne Rich notes in her article "Jane Eyre: The Temptations of a Motherless Woman":

For Jane Eyre, the upper regions are not what Gaston Bachelard calls in the *Poetics of Space* 'the rationality of the roof' as opposed to the unconscious and haunted world of the cellar. Or, the roof is where Jane is visited by an expanding vision, but this vision, this illumination, brings her close the madwoman captive behind the door...Yet Jane's sense of herself as a woman – as equal to and with the same needs as a man – is next-door to

insanity in England in the 1840s...Just as her instinct for self-preservation saves her from earlier temptations, so it must save her from becoming this woman by curbing her imagination at the limits of what is bearable for a powerless woman in the England of the 1840s. (149)

As Jane paces the third floor, her imagination continuously plays out a new narrative, full of vividness. Jane comments on the place of women in society – she waxes eloquently about women’s lot in life and how women are actually the equal of men – and this soliloquy is followed by Bertha/Grace’s slow peal of disembodied, eerie laughter, a reminder of women’s confinement by society and family.

The narrative, the *Künstlerroman*, is inscribed in language (text on the page), created in art, and written on the body by women for women’s instruction. The female body is a text within the text of the narrative. These points can be seen in the stories Lucy, Caroline, Shirley, and Jane are engendering.

Lucy reclaims the *allée défendue* for herself from the mold and fungi, from the overgrowth, and makes this shady and narrow walk her own space (100-101). While here, she reflects on the moon and stars, as old friends from her childhood. Lucy also reflects upon her passionate nature, which she recognizes still exists within her, but she purposefully keeps it buried, wounded, and bleeding. Lucy’s body

becomes her casket. Helen Burn's body becomes her own casket, too. Jane notices that Helen, while being punished, looks like she has retreated to an interior space (the recesses that Jane has in her mind, that she thinks of later as a refuge from St. John) (54).

Caroline considers the plight of the old maid, the dismal quality of their lives, and with Fanny's urging decides to visit two old maids, Miss Ainley and Miss Mann. She looks at herself in the mirror, and sees signs of herself as an old maid, in her image framed in the mirror (176-177). Miss Ainley is the antithesis of Miss Mann, though both are old maids. Where Mann is self-involved and of decent means and not ugly but plain, Ainley is generous of spirit though poor of purse, and rather ugly in countenance. Caroline attempts to live the life of the old maids in her present state but finds that it suits her not at all. She becomes more wan and worn the more she attempts to imitate the life of the maids and blocks out her emotions (180-184).

Jane says to herself: "it is madness for women to let a secret love kindle within them, which, if unreturned and unknown, must devour the life that feeds it; and, if discovered and responded to, must lead, ignis-fatuus-like, into miry wilds whence there is no extrication" (163). Jane frequently uses her artwork, as well as her narrative, to establish meaning in her space – the space of her artwork, and her gendered space in society. WJT Mitchell notes:

The ideological function of painting and seeing in *Jane Eyre* is to provide a mode of liberation for Jane, and ultimately for Rochester, who, like Gloucester, 'stumbled when he saw' and achieves true insight only when physically blinded, dependent on Jane for his eyes. Jane is liberated not just from the confined space of gender, of course, but from the socially ambiguous position of governess and, perhaps even more subversively, from the constraints of Christian piety. (100)

Jane resolves her emotional attachment to Rochester by creating a self-portrait and one of Blanche – having "framed her determination" she sets to it the next day – her portrait, "Portrait of a Governess," "disconnected, poor and plain" (to be drawn in chalk), and the other, "Blanche, an accomplished lady of rank," done in paint tints on an ivory miniature: the types of materials used to inscribe these pictures indicates further the values she places on both roles.

Jane is engrossed in her drawing at Gateshead. She draws several pictures out of the "shifting kaleidoscope of imagination": "A glimpse of sea between two rocks; the rising moon, and a ship crossing its disk; a group of reeds and water-flags, and a naiad's head, crowned with lotus-flowers, rising out of them; an elf sitting in a hedge-sparrow's nest, under a wreath of hawthorn-bloom" (235).

Upon returning to Thornfield after her Aunt's death, and after accepting Rochester's proposal, Jane undergoes a transformation. When Jane looks in the mirror in the morning she sees a different person. She does not resemble her ordinary self – she seems like a blooming, radiant version of herself (259). Rochester calls Jane his little elf and mustard-seed and says that Jane's eyes are hazel – she notes that they were in actuality green, but for him her eyes appeared “newdyed” – so that what he is seeing is not the true Jane but a simulacra Jane (260). David Lodge in his article “Fire and Eyre: Charlotte Brontë's War of Earthly Elements,” speaking of Jane's relationships with St. John and Rochester (in terms of first marriage proposals) says “In both cases a relationship with a man is seen as going down into something, being swallowed up and consumed by something. In Rochester's case the something is fire, and in the case of Rivers, water” (131). Rochester wants to rename Jane, and in effect, to claim her entirely for himself, by renaming her Jane Rochester – and she feels a sensation of fear ripple through her at the prospect. She says that she is not meant for such a destiny and that it feels like a fairy-tale. He wants to encircle Jane with jewels, “loading her fairy-like fingers with rings” (261). She does not want any such trappings (in all senses of the word). Rochester still seeks outward, exterior approval for his actions as he always has; he wishes to

remake Jane in a society lady's image and pays no attention to her wish to stay plain and true to her nature. Of Rochester's attitude, Moglen says "To be transformed by his snobbery – placed on a pedestal by his insecurity – is to be denied her selfhood and it is for herself that she wishes to be loved" (123).

Rochester wants to take Jane on a Continental tour, for "wherever I stamped my hoof, your sylph's foot shall step also." He wants Jane to reimprint his life story, to reinscribe his history through her presence in these lands. She tells him not to anticipate anything "celestial" from herself – she is too "earthy" for such flights of fancy (262).

Clothing creates both narrative and space by covering, and such "covers" permeate the novels. Jane's grey dress is a dress of shadow; Lucy Snowe prefers clothing of somber tones. Caroline's dress is described as a "nun's robe," with her falling curls substituting for a veil (306).

Rochester wishes to enrobe Jane in luxurious fabrics and bright colors, and she steadfastly refuses such garb, bargaining for black and grey dresses. She thinks that Rochester sees her as his slave, his harem, and she tells him flatly that she refuses to be pushed into such a role. Indeed, she says that she would be an agent of freedom to any that she found in such thrall under him. Jane calls herself a "missionary" in this guise (270-271). It is interesting to compare this type of



missionary with the kind she is asked to become with St. John later. In the first case, she is a liberator; in the second case, she is imprisoned.

Rochester himself has made out the cards for Jane's trunks for delivery for Mrs. Rochester – he inscribes her name in a certain image on the white paper (which recalls the white paper metaphor of women, the *tableau rasa*). Jane cannot make herself affix them to the trunks nor allow them to be affixed: "She did not exist; she would not be born till to-morrow, some time after eight o'clock a.m.: and I would wait to be assured she had come into the world alive, before I assigned to her all that property" (277). She goes on to note that the spectral Mrs. Rochester's garments already displaced hers in the closet, and she calls such garments "strange, wraith-like apparel." Jane is fighting the inscription, refusing to be remade in such an image.

St. John also wishes to remake Jane in his own image, under the auspices of Agape, where she would serve with him as a fellow missionary to India. However, he insists that they must go as man and wife, married; he will not entertain the notion that Jane puts forth of going as brother and sister, or as comrades, fellow curates (404-417). St. John wants her to remand her life to God, as he has remanded his own, but Jane resists him, saying in the first proposal, "I scorn the counterfeit sentiment you offer" (411), and in the second proposal, "If

I were to marry you, you would kill me. You are killing me now" (415).

She also notes that "God did not give me my life to throw away" (416).

## Psychic Space: Maidens

There are, amongst others, two ways to read these three novels, *Jane Eyre*, *Shirley*, and *Villette*, that sheds light on the texts as part of the Künstlerroman genre and on the stages and modes of growth for women generally. One may read these texts as separate but related stories of the female search for identity and the development of gender roles outside of those that are sanctioned by society. In this reading, Caroline, Shirley, Jane, and Lucy move through three archetypes of female maturation throughout the three novels, three stages of growth: Maiden, Mother, and Crone. These archetypes can be read in multiple ways: as psychic stages of maturation, as physically embodied modes of growth, and as mythic roles. The archetypes of the Mother and the Crone will be discussed in chapters two and three, respectively.

Adrienne Rich comments on Jane's initiation into womanhood: Charlotte Brontë is writing – not a bildungsroman – but the life story of a woman who is incapable of saying *I am Heathcliff* (as the heroine of Emily's novel does) because she feels so unalterably herself. Jane Eyre, motherless and economically powerless, undergoes certain traditional female temptations, and finds that each temptation presents itself along with an alternative – the image of a nurturing or principled or spirited

woman on whom she can model herself, or to whom she can look for support. (143)

Jane, Caroline, Shirley, and Lucy are all expected to emulate the examples of femininity that they encounter in their domestic spaces, in society, and in art. Their Maiden journeys are also of initiation; they are to be initiated into the mysteries of womanhood. As Maidens, the protagonists are being educated about what it means to be female in their culture.

This process of initiation, instigating a change of perspective, will be part of Lucy's journey to psychic wholeness; she will have to learn to accept the emotional, passionate part of herself, the part that Paul notes in her countenance the first time he sees her, later in the novel. For now, though, this attitude of coolness serves Lucy well. She tells the reader that she is "fixed" with "kinsfolk" (4), from whom Mrs. Bretton comes to claim her for an extended stay, and later on she indicates that she has lost her kinsfolk and must move on to live with Miss Marchmont, the old neighborhood spinster, by way of earning her keep (31-32). So, while the cool, emotionally bland nature of Lucy may serve to protect her from psychic harm early on in her life narrative, she must eventually learn to allow herself to feel emotion.

Polly asks her, before she finally goes to sleep, if she, Lucy, is a wise person; Lucy replies that she “means to be” (29). In a rather cynical passage in her article on *Villette*, Kate Millet says of Lucy Snowe:

Having surveyed the lot, Lucy prefers to be like none of them. Looking over all the ‘role models’ her world presents, the adoring mother, the efficient prison matron, the merciless flirt, the baby-goddess, Lucy, whose most genuine trial is that she has been born into a world where there are no adequate figures to imitate so that she is forced to grope her way alone, a pioneer without precedents, turns her back on the bunch of them. Better to go back to something solidly her own – deal with mathematics, Paul Emanuel, and the job. (259)

This wisdom that Lucy seeks, the knowledge of her self, of who she really is, will come only after she has experienced one enclosure after another, some of her own accord and some by fate, and learns the lessons inherent in each case. Education equals change. Crises and obstacles change a person. The education of women certainly impacts the traditional social and class structures in the nineteenth century. People who are isolated will not evolve. No – they must have conflict. But they must also have enclosure – for people must have a space for personal reflection that will engender a transformation of the spirit.

Frames, framing, and needlework are all aspects of creation – of a product, and of a self. Women are expected to work at needlework – to frame popular aesthetic ideals, and bits of scripture or otherwise wise words, in the needle-worked cloth. According to Hortense Moore, Caroline's cousin in *Shirley*, needlework is essential to womanhood (81). For Hortense, this ability in needlework went back many generations. Mr. Helstone tells Caroline that a clever woman knows how to make shirts and gowns and pie-crusts (98). Mill owners like Robert work with frames, too, framing a certain type of industrial progress, and perhaps framing some of the social ills left in the wake of that progress. The Luddites in *Shirley* break the frames, symbolically and materially rejecting the kind of "frame" Robert Moore is creating as a workspace.

Jane's focus on birds is interesting. The birds may represent the freedom she wishes she had. She will encounter birds many times over in the novel, at various junctures. The birds may also represent the "flights of fancy" that Jane is given to. "To learn the language of birds was a prominent metaphor for mystic enlightenment. To fly up like a bird, in the state of holy trance, was sometimes a prerequisite for initiation" (Walker 396). Jane is undergoing initiatory rituals/situations throughout the whole of the novel. "Celtic fairies were supposed to have bird wings" (Walker 396). Perhaps all the bird imagery reinforces

the idea of Jane as a fairy girl (note also that Brontë was familiar with Celtic lore). Birds are the interpreters between the planes of existence, between the dead and living – they are inherently liminal, on the border between the worlds, both metaphorically and physically, in that flight connects them with the earth and the heavens. They occupy, in effect, a third space, a space which is exterior to all enclosures and yet is a sort of enclosure in its liminality.

John Reed is what the male children in Anne Brontë's *Agnes Grey* will grow up to be, and what little Arthur in *Tenant of Wildfell Hall* would be if his mother, Helen, did not take measures to prevent it. John Reed attempts to punish Jane with a book, not only denying her the knowledge found in books but then using the agent of knowledge to abuse her (12-13). Jane has been like Eve, tasting the forbidden fruit of knowledge. She, according to the Reeds, shouldn't be allowed access to knowledge. One must consider the power relationship between Jane and the Reeds. John Reed actually makes Jane bleed (reflective of the onset of menses? Initiatory? The initial blood that must be shed and sacrificed for the journey into the underworld?). Note also that John Reed orders her to stand at the threshold of a door, "away from the mirror and the windows." Ostensibly, this is so that when he hurls the book (literally "throwing the book at her") he will not break any of the windows or the mirror. But it is significant in

other ways, as Reed serves as the patriarchal voice of authority, who has ordered Jane away from any windows of opportunity, away from any connection to self-image, interior knowledge or the outside world. This initiation serves as Jane's entrance to Maidenhood, as it initiates her entrance into the liminal space of the red room.

Rochester begs of Jane not to allow her curiosity to have free reign and tells her that he will accord to her his confidence only as it is worth having in his opinion. He entreats her not to wish for too much knowledge of his mysteries – not to “turn out a downright Eve” on his hands – he calls her a “fire-spirit” and says she railed against fate (262-264).

The Ingrams initiate a diatribe on governesses, calling them “incubi” and a “tribe,” indicating they are beneath those of the Ingram's status. Blanche also holds forth on the type of man she most desires (a “wild, fierce, bandit hero” – like something out of Sir Walter Scott), the gender roles of men and women (men are to “hunt, shoot and fight,” and should never challenge the loveliness of their wives in their own beauty; a woman's loveliness is her “legitimate appanage and heritage,” and an ugly woman is a blot on the fair face of creation (178-182). Blanche sees herself as a Queen, royalty, and will demand absolute undivided attentions and homage from her husband, and she will “suffer no competitor near the throne.” Mrs. Fairfax has been educated in the ways of the world and reminds Jane of her station,



questioning Rochester's motives and warning Jane to be careful: "Gentlemen in his position are not accustomed to marry their governesses" (266-267).

Martha Vicinus in *Suffer and Be Still* comments on the place of the governess in Victorian families:

The employment of a gentlewoman as a governess in the middle-class family served to reinforce and perpetuate certain Victorian values. But inherent in the employment of a lady was a contradiction of the very values she was hired to fulfill. The result was a situation of conflict and incongruity for both the governess and the family, a conflict which called forth a variety of responses from governess, family and society. (5)

M. Jean Peterson in chapter one of Vicinus' text quotes Elizabeth Sewall (*Principles*, II, 240) on the problem of the governess:

One sensitive observer of the Victorian social scene made the following assessment of a governess's situation: 'the real discomfort of a governess's position in a private family arises from the fact that it is undefined. She is not a relation, not a guest, not a mistress, not a servant – but something made up of all. No one knows exactly how to treat her.' (10)

Governesses occupy an inherently liminal space in society and individual families, above the servants, and both inside and outside of

the family structures as hired tutors and child care workers. Helstone's attitude toward governesses neatly summarizes the attitude of nineteenth-century society towards women's work. He says Caroline's notion of earning her own keep as a governess is "too feminine a fancy" and seems to feel quite put out by her request, which to him means she questions his ability to ensure her living after his passing. He tells her to "run away and amuse herself"; she asks, "With what? My doll?" (189-191).

Caroline and Shirley are starting their journeys as Maidens from two different places in life. Shirley begins with wealth and a home of her own, but without the knowledge of how to make the best use of her monies and talents. One may contrast Caroline and Shirley's portraits as they cross the fields to the Whitsuntide festival – "a snow-white dove and a gem-tinted bird of paradise joined in social flight" (295).

Like Caroline, Shirley, and Lucy, Jane does gain some self-knowledge in the first leg of her journey. She writes away to her Uncle in Madeira, thinking that if she has her own fortune to bring to the marriage there will perhaps be more equality in the relationship (272). She also insists upon continuing as governess and keeping her own company at least until evenings. There is a striking change in the chain metaphor between Rochester and Jane. He looks to his watch chain and suggests that he shall chain Jane to his bosom in the same way,

wearing her like a jewel. This is much different than the chain/string that connected their bodies and souls earlier under the chestnut tree.

Jane keeps Rochester at arm's length and wards off sentimentality and bathos with cutting remarks and the "needle of repartee." Jane considers that she is doing it right because Mrs. Fairfax is pleased with her. Rochester drops his sentimental terms for her and calls her a "malicious elf," "sprite," and "changeling," and show her "fierce favours" rather than gentle kisses and caresses. The older Jane, as narrator, is reflective of this time in her life, this pivot-point:

My future husband was becoming to me my whole world;  
and more than the world: almost my hope of heaven. He stood  
between me and every thought of religion, as an eclipse  
intervenes between man and the broad sun. I could not, in those  
days, see God for his creature of whom I had made an idol.

(274-276)

## Chapter Two: Transformation

### **Physical Spaces: Domestic Space, Stage Space, Landscape and the Body**

Physical space concerns women breaking down borders and parameters, crossing thresholds, and entering into liminal spaces, such as the space between the state of the virginal woman and the fallen woman, the sane and insane, the rational and irrational, reason and passion, the masculine and feminine, and class boundaries.

In discussing men and women, Shirley brings up the Angel/doll image men have of "good" women and the fiendish image they have of "bad" women (352-353).<sup>xv</sup> She says men are "under an illusion" about women, and that they "do not read them in a true light." Quoting Shirley's remarks to Caroline regarding women ("Their good woman is a queer thing, half doll, half angel; their bad woman almost always a fiend"), Moglen notes, "It is the classic distinction between the Virgin Mary and the Whore of Babylon: man projecting his own bifurcated nature onto women: Rochester divided between the elfin Jane and the vampire Bertha" (164).

Caroline and Mrs. Pryor walk the Hollow together, and Mrs. Pryor instructs Caroline about the nature of a governesses' life, and of the nature of marriage (suggesting to Caroline both are terrible states to endure) and her political views regarding social hierarchy. Sounding like Mrs. Marchmont from *Villette*, she offers to take Caroline into a home with her when Shirley marries, and says that she will provide for Caroline after her own death (372-382).

Jane describes her feelings and situation as a winter chill whirling over June, when finally a remembrance of God flutters up from her depths and she makes supplication in her mind. She feels flooded with a torrent – the water imagery engulfs her (298-299). Referring to Jane's flight from Rochester, Rosemarie Bodenheimer states "That Jane should present herself as a Gothic tale-teller on the eve of a fraudulent wedding to Rochester's 'story' suggests that she is in the position of losing control of her own story. Her flight from Rochester might thus be read as a search for a true and equivalent story of her own" (110). Passion and reason hold forth a discourse in Jane's mind as she debates what to do – conscience is gendered male and passion is gendered female (299-300). This engendering of the motivations of the mind – Passion and Reason – is something which all the female protagonists in these novels must integrate.

Jane says she feels an "inward power," a "sense of influence," which supports her as she controls Rochester (304-306). She is clearly able to manipulate him, and he shows his knowledge of this action later in the conversation. Jane tells Rochester to trust in God and Heaven, lead a sinless life, and to hope to meet again with her in Heaven. Rochester says Jane "makes him a liar" and "sullies his honor" by her language (318-319). Jane's passion and reason war within her again – but her respect for her self, not what others will think, is a key point in that she keeps her own counsel. Rochester sees in Jane a "wild, free thing," Jane's spirit, and it is this that he wishes ultimately to possess (320-321).

The essence of the physical spaces in this section is their inherent liminality. In addition to the physical stage space, there are physical spaces that represent returns to the womb and entombment, such as the domestic spaces of the pensionnat, La Terrasse, the moors and Moor House, the Rectory and Fieldhead. In these enclosures, Lucy, Caroline, Jane, and Shirley, broken in body and spirit at these points, will be rebuilt through human agency and the agency of the spiritual realm.

Lucy has a turning point in the pensionnat over the summer, an entrance into liminal spaces of the womb and tomb, when as she is left alone with her herself and the crètin. It is important to note that the breakdown itself occurs during the equinox, the time of balance of

light and dark, equal day and night. Lucy herself is in need of balance in her life, and she will only find it after she completes her underworld journey through her psyche. She is on an underworld journey into her darkest psychic depths, and her intuitive grasping of this situation is reflected in her desire to be covered in earth and turf, away from those signifiers of the living world, the sun and moon. The balance of her mind and body, the balance of Reason, Imagination, the Spirit and the flesh shifts during this passage; as a result, she will be broken down and rebuilt as a consequence of her enclosure.

Lucy has a nervous breakdown, and as a result of such psychic dismemberment she will be reborn into a new persona, one who re-discovers her sexual self. Her sexual self came to the fore briefly in the theatre scene, but Lucy henceforth rejected it. She is left alone with her hypochondria, and once the crètin leaves, she is without any distractions to steer her away from constant self-analysis. She dreams that she is alienated by her beloved dead, by the past, and is filled with despair about the future. Lucy must come to terms with her darkest fears – fears of abandonment, loneliness, and of her shadow self. She wrangles with death in the dream world, the liminal space of her psychic journey, and in a sense she does die when she falls upon the church steps.

Lucy enters the enclosure of the Catholic Church, and of the confessional, in order to obtain words and witness for her broken body and spirit. As a penitent, she is broken down completely and rebuilt in spirit, in this case through the auspices of both God and humanity. After her desperate, delusional wanderings through the city, where she has lost her way both literally and metaphorically, she collapses on the church steps and is taken back to the Bretton household in France, La Terrasse, where Lucy experiences rebirth. Speaking of Lucy's awakening in La Terrasse, Janice Carlisle, in her article "The Face in the Mirror: *Villette* and the Conventions of Autobiography," observes:

Like other Victorian descriptions of the past, this passage is an image of a withdrawal that is also a regression. In the womblike 'submarine home' of memory, one is protected from the storms of adult experience; there the sound of conflict is magically transformed into a lullaby...though Lucy's retreat to La Terrasse, to the cave in the sea, is a time of peace and fulfillment, it renders more unbearable the present solitude and struggle which she must endure. (269-270)

Lucy is in a liminal state in the Bretton home, a state inscribed upon her flesh body and her psychic body. Having been carried to the Bretton house, Lucy sees herself in a mirror looking spectral and pale, a description that conjures up a ghostly image for the reader. She is



enclosed in a white-curtained bedchamber, and the ghostly image is furthered with her description of herself as ashen-faced with skeletal fingers. She is in space that seems to her like a sea-cave, with the colors of her chamber done in soft blues and greens (170). This image of a watery, underground, nurturing space is decidedly womb-like, and appropriate to her situation of psychic and spiritual rebirth. She notes her image in the "dark-shining glass" as a mermaid's image (170). The images of Lucy as taking on the monstrous bodies of the ghost and the mermaid are significant to her gender construction, as both monstrous bodies' resists characterization as either male or female in terms of gender.<sup>xvi</sup>

In *Shirley*, Caroline's time during the middle passages passes in a very different fashion from Shirley's in its content and presentment. Caroline is described in forlorn terms, lonely in her solitude in the Rectory and its grounds, not even finding solace in the garden (where checkered light falls upon her sitting still as a statue) or in the books on the home's shelves (all either unsuitable or incomprehensible to her, or having been read too often to be of interest any longer) (389). The whole passage evokes a sense of staid monotony, a study in chiaroscuro.

Caroline delivers a long speech on the nature of life as it appears to her (390). Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar note, "Women will starve in silence, Brontë seems to imply, until new stories are created that confer upon them the power of naming themselves and controlling

their world" (391). Caroline is starving for life outside of her prescribed realm, and states the malady in bald terms: "I believe single women should have more to do—better chances of interesting and profitable occupation than they possess now" (390). She seems to understand that life should be fascinating and invigorating, but to her it is as though she is being groomed for death, and she is constantly preoccupied with her own morbidity. Caroline considers Miss Ainley, who lives as a Nun does, and whose thoughts are focused on a life lived in peace and joy in another realm (Heaven) while she simply bides her time on the earthly plane. Caroline recognizes that her frame of mind and perspective on life is wrong somehow, but she is at a loss to see how to change her attitude or circumstances.

After returning home to the Rectory, Caroline is taken with fever and begins a rapid downward spiral of degenerating health (421-432). She herself underplays the severity of her illness to all who inquire, but the seriousness of it is obvious to anyone who views her in person. Consider this event alongside the illness of Jane Eyre at Moor House, and of Lucy during the long vacation at Villette and her recovery with the Brettons. All three of these illnesses, though they have physical manifestations, are sicknesses of the soul. They are due to heartbreak, and the subsequent unmooring of the soul from the body and mind. In their recoveries, they must be made whole again, meaning that their

mind, body and soul must again be one unit. Helene Moglen makes a cynical, if accurate, assessment of Caroline's story at this point:

Caroline's story moves in a direction parallel to Shirley's. The apparent differences of their situations are submerged by the larger similarities of the female condition...Mother and daughter live together in passive domesticity waiting for Robert to reappear and shelter them both within the benevolence of his enlightened paternalism. (186-187)

In each case, Shirley's and Caroline's, their crises of identity are wrapped up in their love for their lovers, in their desire to become one with the object of their affections. Also in all cases, the recovery of their soul sickness is aided by the discovery/reconnection with family. In Caroline's case, she discovers the truth of her lost mother, namely Mrs. Pryor, and this knowledge and re-connection literally saves her life.

Jane returns to Gateshead on May 1<sup>st</sup>, Beltane, as Mrs. Reed is dying (228). Beltane is the festival of fertility and is also a festival of balance, of the delicate balance of death and life. Jane allows Bessie to tend to her now as she did when Jane was a child. Jane comments that she trod the same path, hall to lodge, with Bessie years ago. Jane says, "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. The gaping wound of my wrongs, too, was now quite healed; and the flame of resentment extinguished" (229-230).

Jane is in a liminal place, dreaming restlessly of her time at Gateshead and in the red room, and it is in this dream-setting that she sees a presence of light glide up the wall, to the roof that dissolves into the heavens, and finally takes the shape of a woman as it parts the sable folds of clouds: "first a hand, then a white human form shone in the azure, inclining a glorious brow earthward," and the moon mother speaks to her wayward daughter: "My daughter, flee temptation!". Jane acknowledges her being, and says in reply, "Mother, I will" (321-322).

In speaking of Jane's dream and the vision of the Moon that prompts her to leave Rochester, Adrienne Rich states:

Her dream is profoundly, imperiously, archetypal. She is in danger, as she was in the Red Room; but her own spiritual consciousness is stronger in womanhood than it was in childhood; she is in touch with the matriarchal aspect of her psyche which now warns and protects her against that which threatens her integrity...Individual women have helped Jane Eyre to the point of her severest trial; at that point she is in relation to the Great Mother herself. (152)

This vision of the light becoming a moon mother who speaks to her virgin daughter is like a vision of Artemis, the patron goddess of births, fertility, and women. Artemis is a protector of the natural world, so it makes sense that she would appear to offer advice to one of her own, a fairy girl of nature. Robert Heilman refers to Robert Graves' *White Goddess* as a text informing his reading of Brontë's works: "Whether by plan or through an unconscious or semiconscious sense of forces at work in the world, Charlotte tends to make the 'White Goddess' a presiding deity, if not over her novels as a whole, at least over moments of crisis" (38).

The driver leaves Jane off at Whitcross, which is a four-way crossroads, marked with a white-washed stone pillar with four arms pointing in the directions of four towns (325). The crossroads are ruled by Hecate, crone goddess of the crossroads. Jane is at the epicenter now, the place where she herself is at a spiritual, physical, and moral crossroads. Jane, without realizing that she is doing so, offers herself up to Hecate's mercy by laying her body down in the moors near the crossroads. She has left her parcel in the carriage as it leaves her off at the crossroads, which is a kind of sacrifice. She is alone and is destitute, and must turn herself over to the universal parent, Mother Nature. Like any good child of nature would in her scenario, she takes to the moors, and she seeks shelter in a granite crag. Jane constructs

night as feminine – she seeks God’s presence in the night sky and sees the might and strength of God in the Milky Way. She had started her prayer in sadness but ends it in thanksgiving, for the “Source of Life” was also the “Saviour of Spirits.” Jane sees herself metaphorically as a bird with shattered pinions, still vainly seeking to fly home to its mate (326-327). When most types of birds mate, they mate for life – their bonds are forever. Jane is related to the ravens and the crows, and the rookery outside of Thornfield. Jane is in the same kind of liminal space, in her shelter in the bosom of the moors, as she is when she is conceived as a bird. Birds are the interpreters between the planes of existence, between the dead and living – they are inherently liminal, on the border between the worlds, both metaphorically and physically, in that flight connects them with the earth and the heavens. They occupy, in effect, a third space, a space which is exterior to all enclosures and yet is a sort of enclosure in its liminality.

The moors serve Jane as a womb to retreat to, and possibly a tomb to die in, as Jane decides to go to the moors to die, to have the “crows and ravens” pick her bones over, birds who are associated with death and change. She seeks an enclosure to feel “hidden if not secure” but sees a light and moves toward it, which turns out to be Moor House (333-334). She first thinks the light is an “ignis fatuus,” but soon ascertains that it is not just a marsh light. She passes

through holly or yew bushes into the garden and pushes aside ivy to stare into the domestic scene of Moor House. Karen Lawrence, in speaking of gazing and viewing as creating text, notes:

Implicit in my discussion of the cipher is an argument that although 'specularity' and viewing are of major importance in this novel, they cannot be divorced from the activities of reading and writing, that is, from textuality. Spying, viewing, observation, and voyeurism are all central activities in this mysterious narrative, but they are integrally connected the reading of significance and the writing or tracing of significance in the story and the narrative. Within the story, experience is seen as a marking of the self and is related to what Brontë calls 'impressibility' – the ability to be marked or changed by one's experience, to be impressed in the sense of not only recognizing significance but in being altered by it, one's self engraved by the writing of experience. (310)

Jane's birds, liminal harbingers, have brought her to a new initiatory stage, a liminal space to be reborn, Moor House. Jane will be "impressed" at Moor House in many ways – through her experiences with Diana and Mary, and through her interactions with St. John.

The stage space is an enclosure but is also a liminal space, outside the boundaries of time, space, cultural conventions, gender roles, and class constructions. Performance engenders transformation.

Following her recuperation at La Terrasse, in the chapter "The Cleopatra," Lucy is exposed to visual art that further stimulates her thinking about gender roles and the cultural construction of the feminine. Graham leaves Lucy to her own devices in the art gallery, and in perusing the pictures she sees the figure of Cleopatra on a large canvas. The framed picture of Cleopatra frames a particular gender role, that of the exotic, fleshy woman as sexual object. Lucy evaluates this role within the frame of her own experience, and decides that she rejects this image, seeing the Egyptian Queen as indolent and lazy. Paul, fearing that such unmitigated gazing upon this image of womanhood will evoke the sexuality latent in Lucy, finds her and makes her look upon the set of four images of women, called "The Life of a Woman" series, where she sees a maiden, wife, young mother, and widow. Studying this series of framed, enclosed images of women, all of which represent traditional gender roles, Lucy finally calls them "vapid as ghosts" and says that they are as bad in their way as Cleopatra is in hers (190). None of these images of women and concomitant constructions of gender speaks to Lucy – she rejects them all. So this episode, too, fuels her education, by reaffirming those



gender constructions that Lucy rejects, which helps to clarify for Lucy what qualities she wishes to engender. Lucy will not live the life of a traditional woman, as represented by the artwork, nor will she live as a sex symbol – she is in the process of choosing a gendered identity outside of those avenues (187-194).

Through Graham and Mrs. Bretton's auspices, Lucy is taken to other cultural venues – a concert at the principal music society and to the theatre to see the famous Vashti. Lucy is very moved by the great, passionate Vashti. The devil is in her eyes and she is a goddess of suffering, and Vashti achieves beauty in suffering. Karen Lawrence, in commenting on gazing, says:

Lucy's plainness allows her to reverse the gaze, to observe the 'mystery' of the male rather than provide the feminine mystique. Secondly, in the degree of her unobtrusiveness, she becomes a kind of fly-on-the-wall focalizer gaining access of vision by virtue of her insignificance...Thus instead of a mark to be deciphered, Lucy presents herself as nontextualized, resisting the male as viewer who would interpret her...Like the biblical Vashti who refused to display herself for the male gaze, Lucy Snowe avoids the fate of spectacle and becomes spectator instead. (308)

In the enclosure of the theatre, Lucy is changed, in that she sees yet another construction of womanhood, and it is finally one that

resonates with her construction of self. In the image of Vashti, Lucy is shown a woman who suffers, as Lucy suffers, but is able to transform her suffering into art. The art Vashti creates is not the art in the picture gallery, framed and enclosed images of women as virgins, whores, or mothers, but something completely different. One is reminded here of the earlier theatre scene, in which Lucy turned her frustration and suffering into art on the stage in the pensionnat. In the way in which Vashti has bound both Grace and Beauty at her side, though she suffers, she is strong, and the imagery recalls the character of Lucifer in *Paradise Lost*.

Just as the fires of hell in *Paradise Lost* transform Lucifer, Lucy too is transformed by her experience of the fiery passion she witnesses in Vashti and the fire in the theatre. The "evil forces" that write HELL on Vashti's brow, passion and the "abounding blood" (243), are akin to the forces that fuel Lucy's journey toward independence, in that it is these forces in herself that Lucy must come to understand and incorporate. Robert A. Colby, speaking of *Villette*, notes:

In this novel, on the whole, the arts are associated with passivity and escapism, nature with the active mind and reality. For Lucy, therefore, the arts tend to recede in importance as she becomes less a spectator of and more a direct participant in life. The shift is bound up with the gradual process of self-discovery that Lucy

experiences, involving changes of attitude, revisions of judgment, a general re-orientation of her emotions and mind. (40)

Lucy says of her experience "that night was already marked in my book of life, not with white but with a deep-red cross" (244). Lucy functions here again as author, inscribing the experience into her life narrative. The disorder of Lucy's life, psychic and physical, is reordered through the aesthetic of the art she witnesses and experiences. Lucifer becomes a leader in Hell after being cast out of Heaven, making a Heaven out of Hell. Vashti in her suffering, HELL inscribed on her body, is still described as "strong" and a "queen" (242-243). Like these characters, Lucy will learn from her experiences how to be a leader, a strong and passionate woman, and how to make a heaven out of her personal hell. Lucy will lose Graham to Paulina after this episode, but in a sense she has already let him go when she looks upon his countenance during the performance and sees that he is unmoved by the "sinister and sovereign Vashti" (244).

Shirley and Caroline are enclosed in the darkness, on a hill overlooking the mill, and watch the attack on the mill by the mob. Shirley says she is glad that they are there to watch the action unfold with their own eyes, surrounded by silent nature, and she describes the action as happening on a stage (339-349). In this incident, as in

many others, Shirley is both mother and father to Caroline – she alternately consoles her and restrains her.

Moore and Shirley speak of Caroline (at Shirley's instigation). She asks Moore whether he thinks Caroline is peculiar or masculine, and asserts that Caroline is neither...but that she is clearly capable of defying Moore (362-363).

In *Shirley*, as in Charlotte Brontë's other novels, the very land itself tells a narrative, a story inscribed in sun and stone, in wind and water (442-443). Notice how abstractions of the human consciousness appear as agents in these dramas, playing their roles among the natural elements. Mother Nature is indeed alive in these works, almost as a narrative underlying the human narrative, providing a frame (enclosure, in a very real, tangible sense and a metaphorical sense) for the human storyline. All things are reflected in the natural world. The natural world herein referred is both local and exotic; it is Asiatic deserts and biblical lands and the very earth of Yorkshire: macro and micro.

Louis describes Shirley as he sees her (523-524). By turns, when described in peasant aspect, she sounds like Jane Eyre. As Louis says of her, "Much cant have I heard and read about 'maiden modesty;' but, properly used, and not hackneyed, the words are good and appropriate words...I could call her nothing in my mind save 'stainless virgin'" (522). In her riding habit, she sounds like Hedda Gabler, down

to the haughtiness she shows to all men but Louis: "She is never wilder than when equipped in her habit and hat; never less manageable than when she and Zoë come in fiery from a race with the wind on the hills" (524).

Jane sees the family and servants framed in the glass, and the Rivers sisters engaged in an act of translation (334-335). The sisters have goddess names, Mary and Diana (both goddesses who succor virgin women). Naturally, the Great Moon Mother to whom Jane appealed in her flight from Rochester guided her to these literal and figurative sisters. Adrienne Rich notes, "Diana and Mary bear the names of the pagan and Christian aspects of the Great Goddess – Diana and Artemis, the Virgin huntress, and Mary the Virgin Mother" (152).

Jane bemoans the specter of death and the "banishment from my kind!" She says, "I can but die, and I believe in God. Let me try to wait His will in silence." St. John speaks for the first time in the novel: "All men must die, but all are not condemned to meet a lingering and premature doom, such as yours would be if you perished here of want" (338).

St. John considers himself an "alien from his native country, – not only for life but in death" (356). He seeks a life of service, poverty and obscurity – sure it will bring him closer, as a pioneer, to God. St. John makes alchemical references regarding Jane: "in your nature is an alloy as detrimental to repose as that in mine; though of a

different kind." He recognizes a fellow outsider in Jane, someone who is as alien in her own country as he is.

St. John offers Jane a schoolhouse, at Morton, to run for the female children of the local peasantry and farmers, with a two room cottage to live in, a child helper and thirty pounds a year salary. Jane thinks of the position as "humble," "sheltered," "safe asylum," "plodding," and "independent" (357).

Rochester's final home, Ferndean, is described as "deep buried in a wood." It could not be rented as it was too unwholesome and decayed for anyone to make a home in. The "heavy frame" of the forest encloses the house and grounds, and it is said to be as quiet and still as "church on a weekday." Jane enters the property through a portal, into an "enclosed ground" surrounded by woods on which the house stands. Jane sees Rochester emerge from the house, wander a bit, shoo off a servant then re-enter. Rochester is described by Jane in bird imagery – he has "raven-black" locks, a countenance like a "wronged and fettered wild beast or bird," a "caged eagle, whose gold-ringed eye cruelty has extinguished" (433-434).

Jane gains entry to the house and, after a brief explanation to the servants, she is allowed to carry in his water and candles. He thinks that she is but a ghost at first, a teasing presence that will soon

vaporize, but she convinces him she is real as she kisses first his eyes then his brow (435-436).

## **Cultural Spaces: Constructions of Class and Gender Roles**

Cultural spaces are the points of conflicts, where the protagonists confront and break with the cultural and societal borders and parameters. From the engagement of these conflicts (even if there is no real resolution to the conflicts) comes transformation. Richard Chase comments on transformation and cultural heroines:

This poor orphan child with a mission in a hostile world is like Cinderella certainly. Also, she is like Joan of Arc and, as Chesterton observes, the solitary virgin of the folktales who goes to the castle of the ogre. I suggest that to the Brontës, this pilgrim virgin is a culture heroine. The culture heroes of mythology are those figures who, like Hercules, Prometheus, or the animal deities of the American Indians, slay the monsters or overcome natural or human obstacles or bring intelligence to men so that civilization can be born out of savagery and chaos – “transformers,” the anthropologists call these culture heroes. (26-27)

Caroline, Jane, Lucy, and Shirley are both transformers of others, through their words and deeds, and are themselves transformed by the creation of their narratives. The conflicts in the text revolve around borders, and the specific borders that are met and crossed include religion (Lucy and the Catholic church, the Helstone vs. Moore), morality (Jane’s refusal to become Rochester’s mistress,



and her refusal to marry St. John on moral terms), class (Jane and her encounter with Mrs. Fairfax after Rochester proposes, and Jane as a woman without a station, wandering the moors, homeless), and gender (Jane insists that she and Rochester, man and woman, stand equal at God's feet).

Joe Scott, who works for Robert Moore, espouses the popular, patriarchal "biblical view" of the station of women in society, which Shirley – and even Caroline – refutes. He seems shocked that Shirley reads "what a man reads" in the newspapers. Shirley – in a Hedda Gabler moment again – tells Joe that she would patrol the mill and farm grounds with his musket (327-330).

Caroline's long commentary focuses on the plight of the single woman in England and compares the circumstances of her sex to that of Solomon's virtuous woman and Lucretia spinning cloth with her handmaidens. She determines that the biblical vision for women as doing generative work is far more satisfying than the current state of affairs for women in England, and wonders that her society does not learn from this excellent lesson. She also notes that society "forbids utterance" to those whose grievances cause society uncomfortable pause, effectively silencing the narrative these women have to write (390-393). The Sympson daughters, Shirley's cousins, are classic Victorian girls, without any original thoughts of their own. They stand

in direct opposition on this point to Shirley, and even to Caroline, for as much as she does exude conventionality she can and does think for herself (454).

Uncle Sympson declares Wynne's proposal to Shirley and she refuses utterly on the grounds that she does not esteem, admire, or love him, that he is a profligate, a dullard, and is vulgar. Sympson is revolted by Shirley's behavior, wishing that the law would force her to comply (472-473). It is notable that only Shirley's money keeps her from having to abide by his wishes. Louis says Shirley's "Gold and her Station are two griffins, which guard her on each side" (615). His statement recalls the 4 key Victorian M's – Money, Manners, Marriage, and Morals.

Shirley and Mr. Sympson have it out over her refusal of Nunnely, and she tells him that she is an atheist to his god (the World, the god of materiality) (557). Shirley says "I am anchored on a resolve you cannot shake" (558). Shirley is a type of an anchoress in Fieldhead, as an acolyte of the Nature goddess (or perhaps a gender-bending Fairie Queene?).

Jane notes that St. John is not accustomed to women addressing him such as she is now, and she says, "I felt at home in this sort of discourse. I could never rest in communication with strong, discreet, and refined minds, whether male or female, till I had passed the outworks of conventional reserve, and crossed the threshold of confidence, and won a

place by their very heart's hearthstone" (377). Helene Moglen comments on Jane's personal growth through relational separation:

At every previous point of parting (from Bessie, Helen, Maria Temple, Rochester) Jane's 'self,' apparently severed and divided, has become stronger and more integrated than before. The separation from St. John marks the ultimate resolution of her spiritual and sexual being, but the transformation of the Edward Rochester to whom she returns is the crucial condition of the actualization of that being and therefore of the viability of the new romantic myth which the novel has articulated. (140)

Jane is reaching beyond the grasp here, in that the vision Jane employs in her far-reaching view into her compatriots' minds, into their mental/emotional landscape. St. John must conclude that she is "original," which is an interesting term from someone who is steeped in Christianity – does he mean she is a true incarnation of Eve?

Consider the ramifications of Jane as a fairy/woman. As a fairy, she is truly other; she has a kinship with humanity, perhaps, but is outside of the human construction of gender so her quest to reunite with her fairy king, is a different type of gender (and gendered) journey.

## **Narrative Space: Identity and the Künstlerroman**

Jane, Caroline, Shirley, and Lucy are, at this point in their respective journeys, entering into dialogues with their shadow selves. This portion of their experience is the narrative of their struggle to integrate the shadow self. This integration of shadow material will transform their personas.

This is the point of critical mass, where they must wrest control of the pen from the patriarchal forces that have been vying with them to inscribe their personas, their narratives, on their bodies and spirit. There is a fulcrum shift here, from the external world to the internal world.

Lucy lives in the "shadow world" of the Jungian shadow self, a point that is touched on by Brontë critic Barbara Hannah.<sup>xvii</sup> Perhaps this shadow world is part of her journey of enclosures. Lucy needs to learn to integrate her shadow self, her passionate self that she keeps down, and that later Paul will insist must be kept down. Lucy's "reason" is at least in part responsible for her containment of her passions. Unlike Jane Eyre, whose journey involves a trajectory originating in passion and moving toward a balance with reason, Lucy's narrative moves from reason to a balance with passion. If we view Lucy's journey as the journey of the self toward integration, we may well read her constant draw toward the shadows of spaces, and her struggle to integrate the various parts of herself, as a shadow

struggle towards wholeness. Lucy cannot love or be loved by others because she is not yet willing to re-integrate her shadow self, her passionate side.

In her identification with Miss Marchmont, she learns not only about suffering and how to bear up under great suffering but also the power of passion, as Miss Marchmont tells Lucy the story of her great passion with her beloved Frank (a foreshadowing of Lucy's relationship with Paul, and the resultant longing she will experience for him in his absence). Lucy has wanted to strike a deal with fate, to suffer a life of small pains in return for no great agony (34). She doesn't yet understand that at least in part we make our own suffering in life – part of our suffering is due to the perspective we hold on life.

Lucy hides her treasured letters from Graham/Dr. John and buries her grief under the Nun's pear tree. She treats it as a grave, and she is a mourner of those things that are lost, or dead, or never to exist. As she contemplates the moon after burying her letters, the Nun comes to Lucy in the garden. This time she confronts the Nun, instead of fleeing. Lucy demands of the ghost its purpose in tormenting her. She actually advances as if to touch it – and it recedes, as if the power of touch is too much for it, the special magic that would defeat it if Lucy could guide the magic to make contact with the Nun.

The Nun represents many things to Lucy, and among these notions may be included suffering, chastity, repressed desires. In terms of Lucy's relationship to the Nun, Helene Moglen comments "Lucy has also been 'buried alive,' and the specter is the dread shape of the imprisoned, undeserving self of the past: the sterile and isolated self of the future" (219). For Lucy, though not for Ginevra, the Nun stands for, in some respects, the ultimate in chastity, as the Nun refuses any connection with the flesh. The Nun brooks no touching, and if one considers touch is ultimately a marker for humanity, she can be said to deny humanity itself. She is the ultimate alienating force, and as such she is the primary force that Lucy must overcome if she is to defeat her suffering and achieve wholeness.

Lucy's hypnagogic journey culminates in the final confrontation with the Nun, who has come to embody the shadow self that Lucy must gain power over in order to achieve wholeness. Lucy goes back to her bed and discovers what she believes to be the Nun lying in her bed.

Referring to the relationship of Lucy and the Nun, John Kucich notes:

The neo-Gothic nun in *Villette* is a subtle sign of this relationship between reserve and performance, since the nun's costume is a theatrical use of 'repression' as disguise. As a trick used to negotiate trysts, the nun calls attention to Lucy's own reserve as part of a performative psychological organization. (80)

Lucy tears her out and trods the Nun underfoot, discovering that she is an illusion, rending her physical and psychological presence, destroying the Nun's power over her mind and spirit. In Jungian terms, Lucy is absorbing this part of her shadow self, which she must do in order to achieve psychic balance. Nature confers her blessing upon Lucy as she destroys this final illusion, as moonshine flickers over her as she completes the action (440-441).

In *Shirley* Martin Yorke has secreted himself in his father's woods and is reading a contraband book of fairy tales – in the two tales, he meets what is perhaps the Fairie Queene or a version of Epona, and follows her into fairyland, and in the second he sees ereides, mists of foamy water in the shape of women. After seeing these two visions from his stories, he sees the very real shape of Caroline Helstone moving through the winter forest, lost in the woods, her face covered with a veil and dressed in dark silk – she sounds like an ethereal nun (567-568).

All of the four women protagonists undergo underworld journeys toward their psychic goals of unification of the shadow self and ego. Each woman must be broken down completely and then rebuilt on a stronger, wiser frame. Jane breaks down after her failed attempt at marriage with Rochester, a flaw of her judgment and his (which makes sense as they are planning to build a life together, to be bone of bone

and flesh of flesh – each must then be broken down and rebuilt, and Jane in part becomes the rebuilders of Rochester's life and persona). Lucy breaks down in after spending the long summer in isolation in the pensionnat, after she tries to find God and herself in the Catholic Church and the sacrament of confession. Caroline and Shirley both go through prolonged illness that manifest on the physiological plane but begin on the psychic plane.

Jane sees that Rochester is watching her, and she makes for the orchard, which is an "Eden-like" nook, full of blooming life. She says she feels she can "haunt such shade forever" under the auspices of the "now-rising moon." She scents Rochester's approach by the wafting of his cigar smoke, and she attempts to flee the garden before him by crossing in his shadow, a shadow created by the moonlight, but he senses her there somehow: "he had not eyes behind-could his shadow feel?" (250-251). It is indeed Rochester's shadow self that will emerge that night, ready to sweep away Jane's innocence and moral standing with his lustful passion to possess her utterly. Jane may not have second sight exactly but she does possess a "certain knowledge of her own," to borrow a phrase from Lucy Snowe, another observer of people. Jane knows that there is something wrong, some evil afoot, but she convinces herself that it must rest with her, not Rochester.



Rochester also notes that sunset is meeting with moonrise – it is the ultimately liminal point on the Midsummer Eve.

When Jane speaks to Rochester of her spirit speaking to his spirit, as if they had passed through the grave, it brings up the fairy image (otherworldly image) and the meaning of the bird imagery – the land of the dead, of liminal spaces. Jane says to Rochester, “I am not talking to you now through the medium of custom, conventionalities, or even of mortal flesh; – 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!” (255).

Rochester tells Jane to stop struggling like a bird rending its plumage in desperation; she says that she is no bird, and no net ensnares her, that she is a free human being with a free will. It is notable that Jane denies her fairy-self, her bird self, in this passage. Rochester calls Jane his “second self,” “equal” and “his likeness.” He asks her to be his “best earthly companion.” He also says to her, “You-you strange-you almost unearthly thing!-I love as my own flesh. You-poor and obscure, and small and plain as you are-I entreat to accept me as husband.” Notice that he calls her almost unearthly (which, of course, she is), and Jane begins to believe him as he becomes less civil (like the fair folk). Jane tells him to turn his face so that she may read it in the moonlight – what she finds inscribed upon his flesh is

strong and strange workings – he himself says it shall be no more legible than a crumpled, scratched page (256-257).

Rochester claims to know what his Maker will and will not sanction, and he disregards the sanctions of civilized society. After he decides upon his disavowal of Bertha and claiming of Jane, the two lovers find themselves in deep shadow, though the moon has not yet set. They come in at midnight, and the horse-chestnut tree splits down the middle from a lightning strike overnight (258).

Lucy needs an escape from her body. Her body is her casket. She lives in the enclosure (an imprisoning type of enclosure, in this paradigm) of an imbalanced mind and body. Andrew W. Hook notes in his article "Charlotte Brontë, the Imagination and *Villette*":

With its action largely internalized, *Villette* is above all a psychological novel: its drama is the drama of consciousness. . . . Character and event are important in *Villette* only in relation to Lucy Snowe's response, as first-person narrator, to them. Just as much as a novel by James it is the story of the story that really matters. It is through the central recording consciousness of Lucy that the coherence of *Villette* is achieved. (143)

It is important to understand, however, that Lucy's illnesses spring not from any identifiable physical ailment but from her state of mind (hypochondria). When Lucy notes earlier in the text that the "blight is

external" (32), she is only partly right. The "blight" upon her countenance may in part be due to external circumstances, not a physiological disease structure, but her blight is also due to a mental condition. Perhaps her illness has something to do with her Protestant mind-set. As a Protestant, and indeed as a Christian, she has been taught to deny her flesh, as the flesh is inherently sinful. To achieve communion with God as a Christian, one must turn from the flesh and all of its pleasures and pains and focus one's mental energy and physical efforts upon one's faith, and in preaching the glories of God and the heavenly rewards available to the faithful. Lucy's focus, as is Paul's, is on that other world, the one beyond this earthly realm, where people who have suffered like themselves will reap whatever rewards God has in store for them, for their obedience to his divine will (as shown through Lucy's Providence).

Part of how Lucy (and Charlotte Brontë, also) escapes the enclosure of the flesh is through the imaginative world. For Lucy, this is through daydreams and through writing, both creative, generative work. Lucy and Charlotte both write their way to freedom, freedom from the enclosure of the flesh through entering the enclosure of the mind, whose parameters offer a space for expansive mental and spiritual growth. The cell of the mind becomes the corollary of the moors; it is a contemplative space, where one can experience

freedom. Carol T. Christ in her article "Imaginative Constraint, Feminine Duty, and the Form of Charlotte Brontë's Fiction," comments on Southey's letter to Charlotte:

It might be argued that Brontë's fiction shows the common Victorian ambivalence toward the imagination, and indeed it does. But Brontë's identity as a woman gives that conflict a peculiar significance. As her correspondence with Southey shows, Victorian conception of woman's place did not allow her autonomous imaginative activity...On the one hand, she values imaginative energy as a means of achieving satisfying self-expression; on the other hand, her conviction that the world does not permit women such gratification of desire makes her see that energy as vain, self-indulgent, and delusory...Her novels therefore contain an ambivalence both toward the imagination and toward the containment she often espouses. (66-67)

It is interesting to note that Southey, in his reply letter to Charlotte about her writing, sought to deny her this world of writing, this indulgence of imagination, as it would make her an unfit woman. His charge also denied her access to the masculine gendered role of writing, which Charlotte, and her character Lucy, needed in order to survive.

Lucy notes late in the novel that such issues as social status and class are "third class lodgers" in the space of her mind (290). This

attitude toward social status and class is outside of the societal boundaries for her time, and her transcendence of such limitations is further evidence of her inner growth.

Lucy also constructs a certain narrative in her involvement with other people – she is one person with Ginevra, one with Graham, one with Paul, and so on. She has a repertoire, as for each person she is a different persona. Lucy does not put forward just one personality. She is seen in the light of how the observer wishes to see her. In chapter twenty-six, Lucy lists some of her different personas:

Madame Beck esteemed me learned and blue;  
Miss Fanshawe, caustic, ironic, and cynical; Mr. Home, a model teacher, the essence of the sedate and discreet; somewhat conventional, perhaps too strict, limited and scrupulous, but still the pink and pattern of governess-correctness; whilst another person, Professor Paul Emanuel, to wit, never lost an opportunity of intimating his opinion that mine was rather a fiery and rash nature – adventurous, indocile, and audacious. (282)

Ginevra knows that Lucy is a complex personage, and she pleads with Lucy to tell her who she IS, really – what kind of personage is she (288-289)? Lucy tells Ginevra that she is a rising personage – from companion to governess to teacher (which is true). Lucy reflects on

what really matters as she considers Ginevra's appeals; "it quite sufficed to my mental tranquility that I was known where it imported that known I should be" (290). Commenting on Lucy and the narrative structure of the novel, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar state:

Lucy's evasions as a narrator indicate how far she (and all women) has come from silent submission and also how far all must yet go in finding a voice. In struggling against the confining forms she inherits, Lucy is truly involved in a mythic undertaking – an attempt to create an adequate fiction of her own. (418-419)

Lucy has come to understand that her true identity need only be known to herself, and to those who she has let into her heart – and no one else. This attitude is yet more evidence of her continued personal growth.

Graham, though he has spent a great deal of time in Lucy's company, shows that he knows very little of her true personage. He says of Lucy that if she were born male she and he would be great friends. He also calls her an inoffensive shadow (295-297). Graham sees her only as a lady "who is neither hindrance nor encumbrance" (246). He does not see the depths of Lucy's persona, the passion and the reason, in the way in which Paul has from the first night he met her, and translated her character as it was written upon her flesh.

Lawrence speaks to the value of the written narrative for Lucy:

As an alternative to the perils of interpretation Lucy faces in person, she turns to writing, to self-articulation, in her own autobiographical text...Her writing, then, gives her access to power, a means of signifying herself in a different way. Her 'heretic narrative' indeed offers an alternative to the inarticulateness of her speech, marked with privation, and the nun-like silence of her presence. In her narrative, she 'textualizes' herself in her own way; she writes the script and therefore controls to a greater degree the circulation of her own sign. Just as in life Lucy schools the characters around her to interpret a female text different from those they have read before, so in writing she schools her readers to understand her significance. (308-309)

It is no wonder, then, that Lucy must write Graham out of her narrative, by burying his letters; he could not ever know her soul. Lucy puts Graham under erasure, further cementing her role as the author of her own life narrative, as only the author/editor can erase. Paul, however, later declares her born under his own star, and he takes to calling her his little sister (360). As the only person who has seen her true nature, he is bonded to her psychically.

Paul shows himself to be aware of Lucy's dual nature, in terms of her proclivities toward masculine gender roles, during the incident

dealing with his summons to the Athènèe. Lucy accepts the mission to disrupt Paul's class with the message, and as part of her plan to entreat him, she teases with him in class about his professor's cap (299-301). Her use of humor with him, the playful offering of the noose composed of embroidery thread, indicates that she sees herself as an equal to him in terms of power. As she reaches for his bonnet-grec, a signifier of his masculinity and attendant power, he says to her that she may turn into a man for the occasion and go the Athènèe in his stead. As he leaves the class, Paul jokes with Lucy about her power over him, comments which operate on two levels, one of humor, and one of an acknowledged truth about her position with him vis-à-vis gender relations (307-308).

However, as is noted several times in the text, Paul is not always comfortable with Lucy standing on an equal footing with him. He sarcastically and sneeringly hisses in her ear vague threats concerning the limits to which females may aspire. As Lucy notes, "I was vaguely threatened with, I know not what doom, if I ever trespassed the limits proper to my sex, and conceived a contraband appetite for unfeminine knowledge" (331). In a lecture, Paul says that "Women of intellect" are a "luckless accident" who are not fit to be either wife or mother – thereby exhausting two out of five of the feminine gender roles available to Lucy in the world of the novel, the others being a spinster,



nun or a whore (334). She disavows being a woman of intellect, and tells him that though she cannot claim to have the book knowledge that he suspects her of possessing, she sometimes, but not always, feels a knowledge of her own. Paul asks her to explain herself, and of course, she cannot, as the knowledge of which she speaks is the knowledge of her identity, her knowledge of herself as masculine and feminine, and how her construction of self vis-à-vis gender places her in the larger cultural space. This knowledge is important, as it is this knowledge that Lucy has gained from her transformation throughout the text (334). This knowledge of masculine and feminine gender roles, and her place within this matrix, is knowledge that is far more useful to Lucy than the knowledge of Greek and Latin that Paul is so certain she possesses. It is her knowledge of gender that will form the basis of her narrative, the "usable past" which Lucy is constructing for her female readers. For her refusal to cooperate with his plan, for her to write a composition in the presence of his colleagues, Paul accuses Lucy of having a demon-like pride (336). Paul sees vestiges of Ego in Lucy, a sustained sense of self, for what is pride but the ultimate statement of Ego?

Shirley finds her spirit moved by the presence of the Moon, the "sweet regent." Earth is made an "Eden" for Shirley by the illumination of the heavens, bringing forth the inborn joy in her soul to the

forefront of her spirit – it is described as a God and Nature-given gift, and she is said to have the experience of a genii-life because of it (387). “Shirley’s ambivalence is reflected in her religious attitudes as well. She feels, as did Jane Eyre, the need for a female mythology, a religion which is not the product of the male imagination, not an extension of the patriarchal structure. And, like Jane, Shirley finds her spiritual affinity in nature” (Moglen 180). The narrator notes that Shirley is too indolent and inherently lazy to recognize the peculiarity of her visions and to inscribe her experiences as text (the song which is sung to her) (388). Shirley does not write down the experiences, but Jane does, and Lucy does also. In this way, perhaps Shirley is the experience of the soul in the middle of the growth cycle. Heilman describes Brontë as setting forth a “kind of vision fiction had not known since Bunyan” in speaking of Shirley’s rhapsodies involving the moon (40).

Caroline takes up issues of feminism with the Misses Yorke at the Moore household (398-408). Rose takes Caroline to task over her solitary installation at the Rectory and points out that life is for the living, as seen in the book she reads (*The Italian*), that one should use what talents they have for their own betterment and edification as to do otherwise is wasteful and indeed sinful before the eyes of the

Maker. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar comment on the use of the word "talent" in Rose's speech:

The pun on the word *talent* is a functional one since Rose's point is precisely the connection between the financial dependence of women and the destruction of their creative potential: each and every one of the housekeeper's drawers, chests, boxes, closets, pots, and bags represents the very skill that insures suicidal 'feminine' service, self-burial, and silence. (390)

Caroline is well aware of the potential for self-destruction inherent in such service, as shown in her conversation with her Uncle regarding her desire to make a living of her own as a governess. Caroline does not wish to be buried in the Rectory, amusing the curates at tea parties and attending to the work in the jews-basket. In the course of explaining to her Uncle why she wishes to seek a situation with a family, she notes, "I should be well if I went from home" (189), and that she feels weak because "I believe I should have more to do" (190). Rose points out to Caroline that she would inevitably be happier anywhere other than the "widowed grave" of the Rectory: "Much happier, even if you did nothing but wander. Remember, however, that I shall have an object in view: but if you only went on and on, like some enchanted lady in a fairy tale, you might be happier than now" (399).

Louis recites to Shirley "La Premiere Femme Savant" (the first bluestocking), upon her challenge (485-490). It is the story of an orphaned girl, more or less abandoned by her primeval tribe, whose care is ultimately left to the natural world, a world that is created as a utopian ideal of environment. Described in this passage is the image of the woman as *tabula rasa*, a "clear, candid page" on which knowledge may inscribe a "golden record" (487). Note also in this passage that Shirley is seen marking up Moore's texts – again, a habit she had inculcated in her youth. She makes her mark on his pages. As Shirley and Moore take turns in recitation their voices mirror each other, and they seem to be two halves of a whole self, integrated in their love of the arts of recitation. Moore notes that he approves of nothing Utopian in the last paragraph of the chapter (and, of course, the first recitation was entirely Utopian in nature) (493-495). Moore notes that the characters of "queen" and "child" are in Shirley's nature – consider these perhaps as Crone and Maiden, respectively? (505).

Jane is a wild woman in gestation, waiting to come in to her own power, her own ascendancy, as she will note later in her narrative. Here too is another parallel between Lucy and Jane – both women are learning to grasp and exercise power, and they both must learn the difference between power-over (which is what both of them are raised up with) and power-from-within (which is something they learn after

they get a grip on their identities and values). They both also learn when to exert each type of power – what situations call for which kind.

Jane commits to living entirely in the present for her own survival. She talks about her past and future in narrative terms, as book pages: her past is “a page so heavenly sweet – so deadly sad – that to read one line of it would dissolve my courage and break down my energy.” Her future is a blank page: “The last was awful blank: something like the world when the deluge was gone by” (323).

Consider the idea of the woman as a blank page, awaiting inscription. Jane here seems to be committing to inscribing her life story upon her own pages; her commitment to living in the present, and to determining her own destiny, confirms this.

From St. John’s story of her newfound fortune, monetary and family, Jane finds a new link of chain is forged – this one tying her to her human family (as opposed to her fairy family in Rochester). She is thrilled with the bequest of family more so than money, to blood kin rather than gold (386). Attesting to Jane’s visionary capabilities, she looks upon a blank wall in her cottage, and she sees “a sky, thick with ascending stars, – every one lit me to a purpose or delight.” She feels the gold weigh heavily upon her at first, but now her fortune is a “legacy of life, hope, enjoyment” (388).

Speaking of enclosure and escape, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar claim that the Brontës' characters are devising escape routes out of the patriarchal society they, as Victorian women, find themselves enclosed within. It seems that the escape the Brontës, in terms of their characters and themselves, are really looking for is an escape from the flesh, from the body, through the venue of the imagination. Gilbert and Gubar note, "In the process of writing her life history, we realize, Lucy has continued the learning process begun by the events she narrates" (427). Lucy, Caroline, Shirley, and Jane are healing their psychic and physical wounds by giving them "words and witness," per Jungian psychoanalyst Clarissa Pinkola-Estes conception<sup>xviii</sup>, through their writing, on two levels. On one level they, the Brontës, are writing for an audience (both each other and the larger Victorian readership), and the narrators in their texts are writing for an audience (indeed, in the case of Charlotte, frequently addressing such an audience). Lucy, as author, recovers her own voice in writing her narrative: "Lucy's plots have led not to burial but to exorcism, for she is in the process of becoming the author not only of her own life story but of her own life" (Gilbert and Gubar 434).

Lucy, in giving words and witness to Miss Marchmont's suffering, also gives the same to her own. She shall be reborn in Miss Marchmont's chamber, her new life in Villette coming as a

consequence of Miss Marchmont's death. Furthering this image of new life about to be reborn, the reader is told that Lucy sleeps in a crib in Miss Marchmont's closet, an enclosure within an enclosure, one which communicates a sense of infantilization (37).

Jane resolves to marry St. John if it is indeed God's will. The room is full of moonlight as Jane makes her plea to Heaven to "show me, show me the path!" Across the moors, comes a voice well-known and loved, calling her name thrice. Jane recognizes that this is no mere superstition but "the work of nature" that has answered her plea (422-423).

Jane is free now from St. John – it is not his God that has answered her heart's call but the "Mighty Spirit" that she prays to inside: "It was my time to assume ascendancy. My powers were in play, and in force." Jane goes upstairs to her chamber and "fell on my knees; and prayed in my way – a different way to St. John's, but effective in its own fashion. I seemed to penetrate very near a Mighty Spirit; and my soul rushed out in gratitude at His feet" (422). Note the masculine image in place here – she "penetrates" in much the same way St. John penetrates Jane with his rhetoric and searing gaze.

## **Psychic Space: Mothers**

The Mother archetype embodies, literally and figuratively, different things: reproduction, change, nurturing, the cauldron of death and rebirth. Helene Moglen comments on Jane's transformation from a maiden to a mother, in Rochester's newfound dependence on Jane at Ferndean. She notes that Jane's words "belong to the virginal daughter who has been magically transformed—without the mediation of sexual contact—into the noble figure of the nurturing mother" (143). All four heroines experience a transformation from Maiden to Mother in their narratives, educated by "mothers" of various types, from Mrs. Pryor, Shirley's surrogate mother and Caroline's birth mother, to Lucy and Mrs. Bretton, Miss Marchmont, and Paul Emanuel, and Jane, who is mothered by the intangible but imminent Great Mother goddess in nature, by Mrs. Temple, Helen Burns, and the two sisters of Moor House. The Mother has two aspects, the nurturing mother whose bosom and womb are resplendent with life-giving nutrition, and the terrible mother, who calls us to her breast and womb in order to dismember us so that we may be reborn into the world. The Mother's body engenders the sacred cycle of death and rebirth.

It is also worth noting, from a Jungian perspective, that Lucy's educational backdrop, the shapers of the enclosures that she experiences, are either women, or men who have the ability to nurture



her. She starts in Bretton, her godmother's home, travels to Miss Marchmont's home, and arrives in Villette at the Pensionnat de Demoiselles, run by Madame Beck. Her two compatriots, at Bretton and Villette, are female (Polly and Ginevra). Her experiences in the world of art, visual and performed, are concerned with images of women (the paintings in the gallery, and the performance of Vashti). Helene Moglen notes that Paul is a "maternal figure" to Lucy (215-216), and Robert Colby states "Through the awakening and invigorating influence of Monsieur Paul, Lucy herself achieves the harmony of soul she admires in him" (44). Even Paul, who becomes an important teacher and agent of transformation in Lucy, is himself enclosed by women (Madame Walravens, the hag, Madame Beck, and the various incarnations of Justine Marie – the ghostly legend of the nun, his memories of the real Justine Marie, and his ward Justine Marie).

All of the aforementioned women and mothers by proxy have something to teach Lucy about what it means to be a woman, in societal and cultural capacities. They teach Lucy about the gender roles women are expected to play, the cultural meanings of "femininity" and give her something to agitate against in this respect. The Jungian archetypes of the Great and Terrible Mothers, and of the Hag, appear in these women – the Great Mother in Mrs. Bretton and Miss Marchmont, the Terrible Mother in Madame Walravens and also

Madame Beck, the Hag in Walravens, Marchmont and Beck, to varying degrees. All of these archetypes are necessary for Lucy to construct her identity. Lucy's narrative is informed by these archetypes, though not governed by them.

Shirley will not enter the church; she observes a personified Nature in prostration at Her altar, saying her prayers and blessings. She also compares the spirit of nature to Eve – and Caroline says, that is NOT Milton's Eve. Shirley conceives of the great mother Eve and prefers to pray with her than the patriarchal church. Caroline considers the word "mother" as Shirley sees it, and dreams of her own birth mother reclaiming her to her home. Shirley says "The first woman's breast that heaved with life on this world yielded the daring which could contend with Omnipotence..." – she goes on to note the strength of women throughout the ages till the emergence of Christ (319-321).

As John Kucich notes in his article "Passionate Reserve and Reserved Passion in the Works of Charlotte Brontë" regarding the value of reserved spaces, "Reserve appears to be available for the advantage – one might say even the 'fulfillment' – of certain individuals within the very culture that tries to oppress those individuals by imposing reserve from without" (86). Jane, Caroline, Shirley, and Lucy are looking for nurturing and solace in these gestational spaces, and what they discover is that they must learn how

to self-nurture, how to care for themselves, how to be comfortable and happy in their own bodies, in their own personas, in their own lives.

In chapter thirty-one, "The Dryad," Lucy retreats to the alley garden enclosure to settle her life accounts. In the process of contemplation, she discusses the idea of opening her own school, the final vestige of her financial and personal independence. However, beyond this possible accomplishment, she asks whether she is to live without love, "if there is nothing more for me in life – no true home – nothing to be dearer to me than myself, and by its paramount preciousness, to draw from me better things than I care to culture for myself only?" (340). Her choice of words is worth noting in this passage, as she equates a soul connection, a true love for another human being with her hoped-for "true home" (340). A home of her own is exactly what Paul arranges for her, and in keeping with it as her place of independence, though Paul has procured it for her she must keep it up on her own. Once again, Lucy looks to nature as the referent for her narrative; she concludes that she is a crescent moon, not a full orb (340). In reading this passage, one wonders whether this passage of Lucy's narrative is reflective of what Charlotte Brontë was for Arthur Bell Nicholls – his true home, and he hers?

Jane's description of her cottage sounds like Lucy's – as does her estimation of what kind of life she will lead as a teacher. Jane reveals

her feelings – she is not content in this life – she feels “desolate,” and “degraded” by the coarseness of her charges (360-361). Jane declares that “domestic endearments and household joys” are the “best things in the world!” (393). St. John exhorts Jane to look beyond these transient joys, higher than the “transient objects” of “ties of the flesh” to be more ambitious in employing the talents given to her by her Creator, of which St. John warns her God will call to a strict accounting.

Speaking of Jane and Rochester’s relationship at the end of the story and of the relationship between houses and landscapes, Helene Moglen states “The truth of this relationship is an interior truth, as remote from social reality as are Gateshead, Lowood, Thornfield, Marsh End, and Ferndean—themselves all landscapes of psychological development” (145). Note Jane’s travel through the houses: Gateshead, Thornfield, Moor House, and Ferndean. Each home is increasingly more reflective of ties to the natural world, both in name and in nature (the nature of the buildings, grounds and general furnishings, aura, etc.), all of which coincides with Jane’s journey to reconcile her self, her fairy and human natures, and her passion and her reason.

From a psychological perspective, the female protagonists enter into the darkness of psychic death, despair and dis-memberment, and have to reconstruct themselves. They are entering into the archetypal

Underworld, where they must confront and resolve all those aspects of self and womanhood that are abject.

Lucy must undergo one more underworld journey before novel's end, the difference between this one and the previous being the external construction and frame of this particular journey – the hypnagogic night flight through the park brought on by Madame Beck's drugging of Lucy. The opiate Beck orders frees Lucy's imagination, and she goes out in to the night in a liminal state – a hypnagogic state between sleeping and waking, under a "moon supreme" (421-422).

There are some key differences between each of these underworld journeys. Lucy is guided through this journey by Imagination, not Death, and her attitude is different, too; instead of being deeply depressed and anxious, she is excited, her senses keenly aroused by the powerful drug which has freed her somewhat from her inhibitions. The only aspect of Death that rears its head in this passage is visible in the sky over the pensionnat, which Lucy says, "bears the aspect of a world's death" (423). Her interpretation of the sky is on target, as the omen is indeed indicative of a world's death, the world of the pensionnat and all its attendant trappings which have held power over Lucy – Madame Beck, the image of the Nun, which Lucy will soon leave for her own space.

Lucy crosses thresholds on her journey through the psychic underworld, such as the pensionnat threshold (423) and the gates to the park (424). Under a flaming arch of stars, Lucy goes into the park. She describes the space of the park in exotic terms – she enters “a land of enchantment,” not of “trees and shadows” but of “altars and temples” (424). This description furthers the conceptualization of this space as a magical, liminal realm, a space existing outside the boundaries of the conscious world. Water imagery, of the sea, and the tidal wave of people and stimuli, permeates the text in waves, recalling the imagery of rebirth in the sea cave at La Terrasse. Lucy’s aim is to find the basin of cool water, “the circular mirror of crystal,” and to surprise the moon’s reflection therein (424-426).

Lucy is confronted by Graham in the park but manages to evade his steady, questioning gaze. In the process of exchanging glances with him, she comes to an understanding of the status of her and Graham’s relationship – that both will keep an enclosure in their heart, specially set aside, each for the other. Coming to this type of closure of the tension between her and Graham is one of the emotional tasks that Lucy had to complete before she could develop a true romantic relationship with Paul. It seems that now the “unquiet tomb” of her buried letters has ceased to disrupt her dreams, as she does not

mention any further rumination on her romantic attachment to Graham after this point.

Lucy also spies on the meeting of the Beck/Walravens/Emanuel clan in the wooded glen. In viewing Paul come on the scene with his ward, Lucy says that in her whole life she liked to penetrate to the truth of things – to see the Goddess in her temple and to lift the veil. (436). However true this may be – that Lucy has always sought the Truth – she misjudges the truth of the state of affairs between Paul and his ward. She does ascertain some part of the truth, however, when she notes further along in the episode that, regarding Paul’s vows, “the saintly consecration, the vow of constancy, that was forgotten: the blooming and charming Present prevailed over the Past; and at length his nun was indeed buried” (437). Paul’s nun is buried – he has chosen the flesh and blood of Lucy over his long-deceased and utterly unavailable nun. In her comments on the ending of Lucy’s tale, Kate Millet notes, “Lucy is free. Free is alone; given a choice between ‘love’ in its most agreeable contemporary manifestation, and freedom, Lucy chose to retain the individualist humanity she had shored up, even at the expense of sexuality” (263). His vows of constancy and consecration have not so much evaporated as has been passed to a new target – Lucy. Lucy and Paul may not have a sexual relationship, but they do have a loving relationship, as Paul proves his love for Lucy

by endowing her with her own space, away from the prying eyes of Madame Beck. Lucy does not yet understand that Paul has committed to her; she will have to have to be shown the physical space, the enclosure that Paul has secured for her, in order to relinquish the illusion and embrace the truth of Paul's love for her and the truth of her genuine freedom in her own school. Brenda Silver has a slightly different point of view from Millet regarding Lucy's freedom at the end of the novel:

Lucy's life does not end with Paul's; the observant reader will have noted that the school clearly continues to prosper and that Lucy, by the time she begins her narrative, knows the West End of London as well as her beloved City (chapter six). Rewriting the traditional novel to illustrate the limited plots available to women in literature, as in life, she has survived the destruction of the romantic fantasy and grown into another reality. (303)

Paul's genuine love for Lucy lives on in the tangible form of the home and school he provided for her. Though she does lack Paul's physical presence in her life, in the flesh, he shall always be present in spirit, in-forming Lucy's life and mind, and for Lucy, that is enough. As Lucy notes, "I thought I loved him when he went away; I love him more now in another degree; he is more my own" (463).



Caroline and Shirley find freedom of a sort in their connections, albeit not as complete as Jane or Lucy. Caroline finds sustenance in her mother's love – a void has been filled for her, and as she convalesces she no longer cries out repeatedly for water or rejects food (444-446). Note the scene in which Robert and Caroline are engaged (638-639). She has watered a rose tree in her garden (roses are associated with the Virgin Mary and before that with the Goddess), and she stands contemplating the Star of Love (the planet Venus) – and she specifically notes the white of the starshine set against the red of the summer festival bonfires (goddess colors for that season). She thinks that her mother has embraced her, but finds it is Robert – and indeed, he will be mother and husband to her. He refers to Caroline as a rose and himself as a rock – and makes an “angel in the house” comment about her bringing him a “solace,” “charity” and “purity” that he does not possess on his own (641). The “angel” is supposed to inspire her husband to better moral behaviors, and we can see in Robert's attitude that he buys into this mythology too.

Shirley puts off her marriage to Louis with great procrastination, but he eventually prevails upon her for a date. She is described as “vanquished and restricted” and is said to pine away for her lost freedom (637). Shirley so distances herself from her marriage that it is up to Louis to undertake all arrangements, and indeed to assume

leadership of Fieldhead as she abdicates all her power as mistress of the home to him. Shirley makes a comment after a year of marriage indicating that she had to do so, because if she did not abdicate power Louis would never learn how to be a leader (638). Barbara Hannah speaks to the value of marriage in *Shirley*:

From the point of view of the achievement of totality it is the most successful of the three [novels, *Jane Eyre*, *Shirley* and *Villette*], for it ends with the simultaneous double marriage of the two pairs, so that a true *quaternio* is established. Moreover, a sort of epilogue informs us that it was an enduring and fruitful quaternion: Shirley and her husband, Louis Moore, staying on at the manor house which belonged to the former, and Caroline and her husband, Robert Moore, at the nearby Mill, both pairs living long, industrious and benevolent lives. (142)

Barbara Hannah's reading of the marriages in *Shirley* indicates Shirley and Caroline have made entered into unions that are fulfilling and satisfying. Even though Shirley has evident trouble reconciling her love for Louis and desire for his companionship with the concept of marriage, she demonstrates her desire and commitment to Louis in her commentary to her Uncle Sympson: "I would die before I would have another. I would die if I might not have him" (627).

St. John is frozen over again, and his deep freeze seems to cover Jane over as well – she says she is “under a freezing spell” and that “he acquired a certain influence over me that took away my liberty of mind” (398-400). He keeps her under his ever-present, watchful eye, and only rewards her fortitude – nothing else. He is enclosing her in his gaze as surely as Rochester did, attempting to make her over in his image of what a woman should be, what qualities she should incubate and what roles she should play. Jane says with St. John in the room, she feels as though she sits in the room with something “uncanny.” St. John’s control of Jane crests when he starts to extend the ritual of a good-night kiss to his sisters to Jane – his first kiss is an “experimental” kiss, as he carefully gauges her reaction, and is pleased with her grave compliance. His kiss is like that of ice or marble, devoid of passion (401). Jane feels that to please St. John she must “disown half her nature,” and that it would be as impossible for her to aspire to his goals as it would be to change her eyes – his desire to re-form her is indeed creating a type of flesh tie, which is hypocritical on St. John’s part.

Though St. John is certainly not of the fey, he weaves a spell, a charm, around Jane all the same as he attempts to persuade her to go with him, as his wife, to India to do missionary work. Jane comments that she feels an “iron shroud” enveloping her, and St. John’s “shaping

hand" – she feels his influence in her marrow, his hold on her limbs – his influence has penetrated her body, like a rape of her being. Jane finally loses her fear of St. John and sees him for what he is – he is not a saint but a mortal, through and through – "the veil fell from his hardness and despotism" (404-409).

Jane recognizes that if she went with St. John freely, there would be "recesses" in her mind that would be free of his influence, to which he never came, where she could nurture and shelter such sentiments as she pleased. Her body would be under yoke, but her heart and mind would be free – and as long as she could have these enclosures to retreat to – these window recesses, where she could escape into her visions – she could survive. But as his wife, she would become part of him, and he part of her, and so her private spaces would disappear. The fire of her passionate nature would always be checked, and would consume her vitals, destroying her from the inside out (instead of from the outside-in, which going as his sister would facilitate – in either case she would be destroyed soon enough) (410). St. John as hierophant (master of mysteries, priest of the sacred revelations from God) lays his hand on her head, after he has spoken to her of perdition, wrath and redemption (421).

Jane is once again at the Whitcross crossroads; she hires the same carriage and feels like a "messenger-pigeon flying home" (425-

426). As Jane approaches Thornfield on foot, she sees the rookery and hears the crows call. Also, notice the time of year – it is still spring, the month of June, when she sets out to find Rochester. Traditionally, June is the month for marriages. In light of this idea, it is interesting to read the metaphor that Jane uses to describe her experience of Thornfield in its present state. She lifts the veil only to find the “lover,” Thornfield and its occupants, dead and gone. Jane will find her “lover” at Ferndean, in the safety of the deep woods, away from society.

Rosemarie Bodenheimer speaks to the terms of Jane’s marriage to Rochester at Ferndean: “She alone, like the fairy-tale prince, can release Rochester from the prison of despair he has locked himself into...so Rochester’s idea of Jane as his fairy-tale instrument of salvation comes true – but not until it has been rewritten in Jane’s terms” (111). Indeed, as ever, Jane must live her life on her own terms. She refuses the hierophant, St. John, as she ultimately refuses to be mastered by anyone. Jane comes to Rochester with her independence, her own fortune, and will in many ways become the Master of her former Master.

## Chapter Three: Emergence

### **Physical Space: Domestic Space, Stage Space, Landscape and the Body**

Jane, Caroline, Shirley, and Lucy are not enveloped by space; they develop space, and derive power from this generative activity. The power they generate is not patriarchal "power-over," but "power-from-within."<sup>xix</sup> As Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar note regarding women reclaiming their own power in terms of Mary Shelley's cave parable:

This last parable is the story of the woman artist who enters the cavern of her own mind and finds there scattered leaves not only of her own power, but of the tradition which might have generated that power. The body of her precursor's art, and thus the body of her own art, lies in pieces around her, dismembered, dis-remembered, disintegrated. How can she remember it and become a member of it, join it and rejoin it, integrate it and in doing so achieve her own integrity, her own selfhood?...Her trip into the cavern of her own mind, despite (or perhaps because of) its falls in darkness, its stumblings, its anxious wanderings, begins

the process of re-membering...the female artist makes her journey into what Adrienne Rich has called 'the cratered night of female memory' to revitalize the darkness, to retrieve what has been lost, to regenerate, reconceive, and give birth. (98-99)

In this passage, Gilbert and Gubar dilate upon the process by which female artists claim their identities, and refer to the re-membering of the selfhood as a process of the artist reclaiming the bits and pieces of women's narratives, the "body of her precursor's art." In the process outlined in this dissertation of enclosure, transformation, and emergence, Jane, Caroline, Shirley, and Lucy demonstrate their integrated selves as they have each descended into the cave of experience, and have come out the other side with viable narratives for women. They have completed their journeys of education and are now in a position to educate others, in such venues as schoolhouses, domestic spaces, and in their narratives. Brenda R. Silver, speaking of Lucy Snowe notes:

Lucy both courts and laments the roles assigned to her by others in what is rightfully read as her search for selfhood. Ultimately, however, who Lucy is is inseparable from what she is: a teller of tales unspeakable in the presence of either her comfortable and comforting godmother and the friends who surround her at La Terrasse, or the colder, more worldly, yet equally

uncomprehending eavesdroppers at the pensionnat on the Rue Fossette...Knowing, however, that cannot trust others to perceive her as she is – that even when she is not invisible she is more than likely to be misread – Lucy goes one step further: she projects her readers into the landscape of the novel, the text, and asks them to use their imaginations in a mutual act of creation which in turn validates her own emerging self. In this way her narrative both inscribes her evolving identity and establishes a community of readers whose recognition and acceptance provide the context necessary for an individual's growth to maturity – a context all too often denied to women. (287)

Lucy and Paul meet again before he leaves, where Lucy finally admits publicly to the real truth – that her heart would break if she were denied Paul's presence. Here, she has finally penetrated to the truth of things, in her admission of love. Of Lucy's declaration of her love for Paul, Moglen states "Her capacity for love, newly discovered, newly explored, brings with it self-knowledge and expression" (224). In speaking of Paul's declaration, Helene Moglen observes "In his love, Paul has also been able to find the will to self-assertion" (224). On their last journey together, Paul shows her what he has been preparing for her, her new place of abode and her schoolhouse, and so



Lucy's journey of education is over – she has been educated, and now has her own place in which to educate others.

In the last chapter of *Villette*, Lucy says, "M. Emanuel was away three years. Reader, they were the three happiest years of my life" (461). Lawrence notes, "If it is Paul's presence that enables the love plot to continue, it is, as Karen Chase points out, Paul's absence that allows the plot of ambition to thrive – Lucy succeeds as headmistress and writer, in the spaces provided by Paul's absence" (317). Paul's absence in the flesh and his presence in his benevolent gifts to Lucy allow Lucy to flourish in her new space. Paul is present to Lucy during this time in the letters he writes to her, and even in his absence he provides nurturance: "His letters were real food that nourished, living water that refreshed" (462).

Referring to the end of the story, Karen Lawrence notes "Lucy returns us to herself as writer, 'figuring' her story and its arbitrary ending ("enough said"). The space provided by Paul's absence has allowed for the writing of the 'heretic narrative'; it allows a space for Lucy to record her experiences with 'resolute pen'" (317). She has her independence, which she has more than earned by her steadfast insistence on her own worth and identity. Andrew Hook states:

In *Villette*, just as in *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Brontë sets high value on individual independence and freedom. Both *Jane Eyre* and

Lucy Snowe have a healthy sense of their own worth, and many of their trials arise from their need to assert and preserve their individuality...but what Lucy discovers in this closing section of the book is that freedom is not to be defined only as a negative preservation of individual independence, and is not to be achieved at the expense of feeling and the imagination. (155)

Even though Lucy will not have Paul in the flesh in the end, she does have his love, shown in a tangible form in the enclosure he has lovingly prepared for her. Lucy and Paul have educated each other, nurtured each other through their shared love, on their individual paths to selfhood.

Robert Moore returns home to his cottage and says he does so "sadder and wiser" than he was six months prior when he left it. He knows now that financial ruin, while indeed a low state, is not akin to personal dishonor. He professes to his sister that he is "glad to be home," an odd phrase from a man who had never really considered the cottage in the Hollow his home, "and to whom its narrow limits had always heretofore seemed rather restrictive than protective" (596). Robert is finding the value in such an enclosure in a way that he could not before his underworld journey. Caroline is sent for by Robert, and upon her arrival there is a tranquil, pleasant domestic scene, and

Robert says again that he is "pleased to come home" (598). For indeed, Caroline's presence makes his house a home.

The metaphors (teachings) of the horse chestnut tree are important to note, as they apply to all three novels. Two halves reunited, growing strong together – the fractures have been healed. On the eve of their original wedding day, Jane repairs to the orchard for safety and solace, as her mind is troubled on her wedding eve (278-279). The wind blows strong from the South, and one must consider all the possible connotations of this direction: Bertha's homeland, the notion of change. Jane looks upon the horse chestnut tree, split and decaying, and says of each piece, "each of you has a comrade to sympathize with in his decay." A blood-red moon shines through the two halves after she speaks to the tree. Robert Heilman summarizes Brontë's efforts in employing the moon in her works:

She is restating in lunar imagery the problem with which she was always concerned – the distinction between an imagination which falsified reality by creating specious comfort or needless fear, and imagination which intuited truth. She rejects moonbeam mirages but never the moon. If she is on guard against quixotic mistakes, it seems to me safe to say that she never rejects the quixotic vision. (48)

As Heilman notes in his commentary, Charlotte Brontë uses the forces of nature to communicate truth, and this is true of the lessons imparted by the horse chestnut tree, the moon, and other ambassadors of Nature as the Great Mother.

Caroline begins her journey as the ghost of Mary Cave in appearance. Enclosed in her room, Caroline sees her image in outline on the wall – a pale phantom. In her mind's eye, she sees the freedom and joy she and Robert experienced in nature, in the enclosure of the woods, and she contrasts it with her present state of affairs (172-173). Caroline, after suffering through a dismemberment of spirit as serious in kind as the cracked hawthorne tree, is healed through reunion with her mother, Mrs. Pryor, and her union with Robert Moore. Shirley, the matron of Fieldhead, seems to have everything at the start of her journey: money, a home of her own, and a faithful friend and companion in Mrs. Pryor, her governess. However, Shirley lacks for love, and the Captain must navigate her way through the paths of union offered (Robert Moore, Samuel Fawthrop Wynne, Sir Philip Nunnely) to find her true love match with her tutor, Louis Moore. Lucy, upon meeting Mrs. Marchmont, sees herself in the mirror as "a faded, hollow-eyed vision" (32). Though she recognizes that she still feels "life at life's sources," she is like the split horse chestnut tree, as she must find the ways in which she can feed the source of her life, the

wellspring of her desire, which eventually comes to pass as a result of her relationship with Paul Emanuel.

Consider Rochester's insubstantiality to Jane earlier on in the novel; though he was only at time a "dream" to her, he has form and substance now. All is surreal to Jane upon seeing Rochester; she calls him phantom-like and a mere dream. He puts his hand and arm in front of her and asks her whether she finds them real. She says, "yes, though I touch it, it is a dream" (281). By the end of the novel, Rochester and Jane are united in flesh, soul, and spirit. As Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar point out in their chapter on *Jane Eyre*:

Apparently mutilated, he is paradoxically stronger than he was when he ruled Thornfield, for now, like Jane, he draws his powers from within himself, rather than from inequity, disguise, deception. (369)

Rochester's very soul demands Jane, or it will play havoc on his earthly frame. She pledges herself to him, to be his "eyes and hands." Jane also says she must "rehumanize" him – he is being metamorphosed into a lion, his hair is like "eagle feathers" and she speculates on his nails as claws. He shows her his deformities, and she is not dissuaded in the least (439).

In quoting from Tennyson's poem *The Princess*, John R. Reed notes: "Tennyson's recommendation, when Prince and Princess finally

unite, is that 'the man be more of a woman, and she of man' VII" (52). He also says, in speaking of archetypal women's gender roles, "It was a question of finding the proper balance between Judith and Griselda" (52). The first quotation speaks to the anima/animus concept of Jung, whereby men and women reflect a balanced, integrated persona. Secondly, Jane, as well as her compatriot female protagonists in the other novels find their balance between the strong Judith and the patient Griselda.

## **Cultural Space: Constructions of Class and Gender Roles**

Jane, Caroline, Shirley, and Lucy, having broken and reconstructed the borders of class, cultural roles and gender roles, have created new class, cultural and gender roles for themselves, and by extension for other women. As Harold Bloom notes in his introduction to *Jane Eyre: Modern Critical Interpretations*, "Is Rochester a man? Is Jane Eyre a woman?...The nuances of gender, within literary representation, are more bewildering even than they are in the bedroom" (5). Caroline moves beyond becoming a copy of Mary Cave. Jane has become a Fairy Queen to her Fairy King. Lucy has become a Wise Woman teacher.

Jane says of herself at Gateshead, as a child, that she was "unwilling to purchase liberty at the price of caste" (26). In the end, Jane will not purchase liberty at the price of caste, as she will have found money, manners, and family – and will have liberty within her marriage to Rochester, as she will lead him, as his hands and eyes. As Rosemarie Bodenheimer in her article "Jane Eyre in Search of Her Story" points out regarding Jane's relationship with Rochester at the end of the story, "She becomes 'the instrument for his cure', in the way he had earlier intended, but through the powers of the storyteller to move her audience" (103). Bodenheimer goes on to say of Jane as storyteller, "In the end it becomes impossible to answer the question

'Then what kind of story is Jane's life?' For it is the life of a storyteller in a world full of fictions, a teller whose claim to originality as a character rests in her ability to take charge of so many kinds of stories in a narrative that seems both to credit and quarrel with them all" (112).

Jane tells Rochester that her heart belongs to him alone – and that if fate bade her to leave him, it would remain with him forever. He thinks of himself as useless and dead as the old lightning-struck chestnut tree – but Jane points out that he is green and vigorous at the roots and will regenerate. "Plants will grow about your roots, whether you ask them or not, because they take delight in your bountiful shadow, and as they grow they will lean towards you, and wind round you, because your strength offers them so safe a prop" (447). Rochester asks Jane to marry him, and she assents heartily. He tells her that he has worn her intended bridal necklace around his neck, under his cravat, as a token/talisman of his vanished love. He says that in the year they have been separated, he has had to walk through the "valley of the shadow of death" in order to be humbled and so reborn to God. He tells Jane about calling to her through the woods in the moonlight night, and of hearing her voice in return. He intimates to her that their spirits must have met and mingled out in the wilds somewhere, and Jane keeps her experience of that evening to herself, and "ponders this in her heart" (note the language here; it



is the same language Mary uses in the Bible). He pledges before Jane and God to lead a purer life than he has previously (448-451).

Rochester and Jane do live in a sort of cave/liminal space at Ferndean. The "alabaster cave and silver vale" signifies Ferndean as a womblike enclosure, set apart from the world at large and the rules of human society. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar note, "Ferndean, as its name implies, is without artifice – 'no flowers, no garden-beds' – but it is green as Jane tells Rochester he will be, green and ferny and fertilized by soft rains" (370). Rochester is Jane's Celestial City (a la *Pilgrim's Progress*). Regarding St. John Rivers, the "recesses" in Jane's mind would never be enough – though she would have positive enclosures she would have no windows of opportunity.

Caroline, Jane, Lucy, and Shirley have taken ownership of and transformed the cultural role of the working woman. At the end of the protagonists' journey to identity, the working, independent woman is not constructed as a low-class marginalized woman stripped of her femininity by her generative work and denied masculinity because of her sex. They have an inherent sense of their self-worth, and are comfortable with their femininity and masculinity.

## **Narrative Space: Identity and the Künstlerroman**

Jane, Caroline, Shirley, and Lucy have completed their *Pilgrim's Progress*, and have found the peace and self-knowledge for which they sought throughout the narrative. Their journey ends on the earthly plane, however, not the celestial plane as in *Pilgrim's Progress*. These women come to live in two places; the earthly, concrete domains of their bodies and their homes, and the liminal space of their narratives, their art. Jane, Caroline, Shirley, and Lucy's narratives become part of women's usable past, influencing the shape of women's narratives, in art and life, to come. John Kucich speaks to psychic space and narrative freedom:

Brontë, the English novelist who first fully develops a logic of emotional reserve, destabilizes her characters in relation to struggles for power, and in that way promises them a kind of psychic freedom not limited by its relation to 'tactical' pressures, a freedom that appears to be more pleasurably undefined and undefinable. (69)

Lucy compares the spatial and temporal enclosure of her godmother's home to the journey of Christian and Hopeful from Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, where they find themselves on a river bank that seems as though it is caught up in perpetual spring, with green trees and lilies the year round (4). Lucy shall eventually, like Christian and Hopeful,

have to leave the fair and lovely realm of everlasting fruition and move on through different and rougher terrain in order to achieve the goals of knowing oneself and finding wholeness, such as when she journeys to Miss Marchmont's home, and then across the water to Villette. After this journey, Lucy can tell her own story:

After Paul's death, she receives at last the inheritance from Miss Marchmont. She is responsible for her school. She is of use. She pursues her talents and maintains relationships. Without hope, she is not happy, but she is strong. Virginal, she has still experienced passion. Childless, her life is full of children and will not be sterile. Alone and lonely, she is not alienated. Surviving, she need not live as a survivor. She does not have to tell the story of another. Now she can tell and understand her own.

(Moglen 229)

Caroline is substantial/substantiated now (by virtue of finding her mother, her lover, and her courage); she is integrated, no longer a "ghost of herself," as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar point out (378), like the ghost of Mary Cave that she resembled for so long. Caroline's story is the story of learning to inhabit her flesh. As Katherine M. Rogers points out in *The Troublesome Helpmate: A History of Misogyny in Literature*, "Insistence of women's weakness and the sweetness of submission was a gentle way of keeping them in

subjection, and in subjection, of course, they were prevented from doing harm" (180). Consider Caroline and the interaction with her Uncle in this statement, and consider the relationship between Jane and St. John, and Lucy and Paul. Earlier in the novel, Caroline refers to Shirley as Moore's "fairy shadow," and Robert says "Lina, you haunt me." He professes to see her form in myriad aspects of his life, particularly in nature but also in his abode and mill (254-255).

Robert's dreams of "improving" the Hollow and surrounding lands are in keeping with the industrial strivings of the nineteenth century (644-645). He sees civilization as preferable to wild spaces, and sees progress in the paving over of the landscape. He values the human life over the fairy life. He sees himself as bringing prosperity to the parish through his pouring of the Pactolus waters through Briarfield. Caroline values the wild spaces, as her fairy spirit would desire; Roberts ideals are grounded in the world of men, not the fey. He also assumes that the women – Caroline, Shirley, and Miss Ainley – would be pleased to run a day school, and plans for them to do so. Helene Moglen takes a negative, cynical view of the marriages in *Shirley*:

Although the heroines find husbands, they seem diminished rather than fulfilled by their marriages. Shirley's potential is thwarted. Caroline's questions are silenced...The momentary

glimmering of light is extinguished. It can only be recaptured in  
tales told by women to children and to one another. (188-189)

This is precisely the point of all three of these narratives, a point that Moglen seems to gloss over in her reading of the novel's ending; these stories are indeed "tales told by women to children and to one another," and in the telling and re-telling women are enlightened – thus the "glimmering of light" remains lit, a beacon to women in generations to come.

## **Psychic Space: Crones**

The Crone archetype represents the wisdom of lived experience, the wise woman who has gained mastery over her own life (like the tale told by the Wife of Bath). Lucy, with her white hair under a white cap, and Jane, having born her children, have both come to this stage.

At the end of their journeys to identity, Jane, Caroline, Shirley, and Lucy are women who have reconciled the feminine and masculine aspects of their selves. They have balanced their reason and their passion, and have achieved their journey to wholeness. They now possess the wisdom of the Crone, after having experienced the cycle of death and rebirth.

In recounting her life narrative in her old age, Lucy achieves self-integration. The evidence is written on her body and the printed page. Her white hair, "white under a white cap, like snow beneath snow" (40) is a vestige of wisdom and is inscribed on her body. She inscribes her narrative with a pen on white paper, a masculine and feminine action, respectively, and a further indication of her integration of masculine and feminine genders in herself. The paper itself is both text and space, both of which she is consciously constructing/reconfiguring. Robert Colby notes, in speaking of the ending of the novel, "Bitterness and irrational passion give way to

understanding and acceptance of things as they are" (47). Janice Carlisle, speaking of autobiographies, notes in a comparison to Dickens:

Unlike David, who writes his story with Agnes seated next to him, Lucy is another Miss Marchmont, alone with her memories. Yet she recounts the marriage of Paulina Home and Graham Bretton with such calm disinterest one might think that it causes her no pain. How does this situation come about? In one sense the answer to this question is very simple. Lucy's writing of her story in the first and second volumes is itself the activity that allows her to triumph over her earlier inability to confront the implications of memory...As Lucy tells us, if she were a nun, she would have no reason to write her confessions. The act of recording her past must, therefore, provide Lucy with the specifically temporal satisfactions that this world has denied her. (267)

Lucy achieves an integration of both the masculine and the feminine in her self, through her act of writing her narrative, and she also claims the act of writing for herself, by nature of the way she constructs her narrative.

Perhaps part of Jane's life work is to recognize the Divine Feminine as well as the Divine Masculine, to come to understand these two sides of spirituality in order to construct her spiritual self. Her first exposures to Christianity come in the form of any teachings she received from Mrs. Reed and her nurses (Bessie, et al.), any reading

she did on her own, and then from Mr. Brocklehurst, and finally from her beloved friends and teachers, Helen Burns, and Miss Temple. She must learn to separate the truth from the egoistic false rhetoric offered by those who profess the Christian faith. Indeed, one of the things Jane will learn is that situations and people are rarely what they seem on the surface.

Acknowledging the Freudian readings of Rochester, Adrienne Rich asks, "What kind of marriage is possible for a woman like Jane Eyre? Certainly not marriage with a castrate, psychic or physical. (St. John repels Jane in part because he is emotionally castrated.) The wind that blows through this novel is the wind of sexual equality – spiritual and practical" (154). Rich goes on to note, more generally about marriage in the novel:

Marriage is the completion of the life of Jane Eyre, as it is for Miss Temple and Diana and Mary Rivers; but for Jane at least it is a marriage radically understood for its period, in no sense merely a solution or a goal. It is not patriarchal marriage in the sense of a marriage that stunts and diminishes the woman; but a continuation of this woman's creation of herself. (155)

It is not so unusual, as critics have noted, that Jane goes off into the forest with Rochester and leaves her human family at the home that Jane provides for them. Jane is "other" – she is not of their ilk, even if



they are related – and so it is natural that she would prefer to be with her counterpart in otherness, Rochester.

Caroline begins her story trapped in the rectory with her Uncle, Mr. Helstone, who cannot offer her love and affection, only paltry advice about learning to make shirts and gowns and pie-crusts. Her initial rejection by Robert teaches her about the bitter disappointments possible in the realm of romantic love. The narrator illustrates the lesson of the stone and the scorpion with chilling instruction: “For the whole remnant of your life, if you survive the test – some, it is said, die under it – you will be stronger, wiser, less sensitive” (105). Caroline becomes trapped in her sorrow and loss, and is rescued from self-immolation by her long-lost mother, the wise crone, Mrs. Pryor. The wisdom Caroline absorbs from Mrs. Pryor and from Shirley Keeldar re-invigorate her spirits, and she does indeed survive the aforementioned test.

Shirley Keeldar also grows in wisdom and spirit through the course of her story, in that through her trials she reconciles the masculine and feminine aspects of her persona, Captain Keeldar and the woman Shirley Keeldar, respectively. Shirley survives the bite from the mad dog, Phœbe, who belongs to Mr. Wynne, one of her spurned suitors, and comes to accept her love for Louis as genuine. It is interesting to note that in each heroine’s case, the crises of identity

are wrapped up in each woman's love for their lovers, in a desire to become one with the object of their affections. Also in all cases, the recovery of their soul sickness is aided by the discovery/reconnection with family (Jane at Moor House, Lucy at La Terrase, Caroline and Mrs. Pryor, and Shirley and her young cousin, Harry Simpson).

## Conclusion

### Tabula Rasa

Pertinent to this discussion is John Locke's notion regarding the minds of newborn children as *Tabulae Rasae*, in Book I of *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*.<sup>xx</sup> One may also consider the narrator of Mary Shelley's *Lodore*: "He found the lovely girl somewhat ignorant; but white paper to be written on at will, is a favourite metaphor among those men who have described an ideal wife." Jane, Caroline, Shirley, and Lucy, in a sense, begin their journeys as white paper to be written on, in terms of their virginal bodies, and to an extent their personas are inscribed upon their bodies by culture and society, by external forces. In an endnote commenting on inscription/impression, Karen Lawrence notes:

Although the complexity of the reciprocal process of inscription between Lucy and Paul qualifies the topos of the man writing on the blank page of the woman, Paul is the writing master who aggressively tries to leave his imprint on Lucy. The rhetoric of textuality applied to Lucy's and Paul's relationship is at times

almost egalitarian, as when he tells her they have similar 'impressions' (I say 'almost,' because it is he who instructs her to read their similar characters in the mirror). On the other hand, Paul often tries to force Lucy to be written on or to write his way, even asking her at one point to be his amanuensis. (318)

In writing her narrative, then, Lucy achieves an integration of masculine and feminine aspects of identity on multiple levels. In one sense she undertakes a masculine action by inscribing her narrative on paper. However, Lucy is female, and so her act of writing her life story takes on another level of meaning. Lucy's act of writing is generative work, in that she is not creating a static object, such as a textile, but something that is in flux – her continuing life story, her history, her narrative. She claims this act of creation for herself, and tells her own history in and on her own terms, giving and withholding information as she deems fit, selecting certain aspects of her life story to emphasize and others to gloss over.<sup>xxi</sup>

In *Shirley*, one may note the image of the woman as tabula rasa, a "clear, candid page, whereon knowledge, should knowledge ever come, might write a golden record" (487). Louis has made his mark on Shirley through the course of his tutelage; he notes, however, Shirley's propensity to leave her own mark: "Miss Keeldar, her mark – traced on every page" (490). As noted earlier, Shirley does not write

down her peculiar visions, the song which is sung to her (388) but she does make her mark on Caroline, Louis, Mr. Helstone, Harry Sympton, and Robert Moore. Caroline is marked by Shirley and Mrs. Pryor's tutelage, evinced in such passages as Shirley's Titaness visions of the Great Mother (319-321), and Mrs. Pryor's teachings regarding marriage and the plight of governesses (372-382). Caroline also notes that society "forbids utterance" to those whose grievances cause society uncomfortable pause, effectively silencing the narrative these women have to write (390-393).

However, they eventually wrest control of the pen, and inscribe their own stories, their own identities, upon their bodies and upon the page. As Kate Flint points out in "Women Writes, Women's Issues" regarding Jane Eyre:

For Jane's marriage, rather than constricting her, may, given the first-person narrative form of the novel, be read as releasing her – releasing her into writing. Throughout, Jane Eyre explores the relationship between texts (both verbal and visual), interpretation, and autonomy. It suggests that the imaginative sphere is one which allows scope for both re-writing, and re-possessing, existent formulations, and for independent endeavor. (182)

Jane's marriage does appear to confirm her independence conjoined with her happiness; she has not purchased love at the price of

confinement, as she would have if she had joined with Rochester at Thornfield as his mistress. Jane has also not sold her soul for soulless marriage to St. John, a move that would have surely silenced her narrative. As she states in the close of her narrative, "Reader, I married him," an active statement that confirms her independent choice in the matter (452).

In reflecting upon Kate Flint's previous commentary on *Jane Eyre*, one may note that Caroline's marriage releases her from the "windowed grave" of the Rectory (399), and she moves from a life of living death, entombed in the Rectory to an evidently robust life with Robert Moore at the Mill, complete with a space for her beloved Mother, Mrs. Pryor. Robert Moore notes in the course of his marriage proposal to Caroline, when she asks him if he will do good with his money, "I will do good; you shall tell me how; indeed, I have some schemes of my own, which you and I will talk about on our own hearth someday" (643). Robert here invites Caroline's input, her inscription, and her direction of his business intentions as a married couple.

In speaking of Lucy Snowe and her autobiographical account, Janice Carlisle states "Lucy consistently sees herself as one of the vanquished. But if some victors are born, Lucy's narrative proves that others can be made" (284). Continuing her discussion of Lucy Snowe, Carlisle states further on:

In her hands, the already highly developed conventions of autobiography reach a new level of complexity and subtlety. Both character and creator construct a narrative mirror in which self appears vindicated against the slights experience has dealt them and consoled for the indifferences with which others have treated them. (284-285)

The paper itself is both text and space, both of which Lucy is consciously constructing/reconfiguring. At the end of her tale, Lucy is both masculine and feminine, writer and text. Through writing her narrative, Lucy gains the psychic wholeness of gender integration.

Kathryn R. King, in her article "Of Needles and Women's Work," focuses on the non-anxious delight women writers took in writing, with actual and figurative pens, in pre-Victorian times. She is in opposition to Gilbert and Gubar's assertions about women and the anxiety of authorship. "After all, if the pen is a metaphorical penis, it is a conveniently detachable one that can be taken in hand and discharged with equal facility by either gender" (78). Carol T. Christ comments on the strengths and weaknesses of Charlotte Brontë's approach to women's fictions:

Virginia Woolf has written that the woman writer must kill the angel in the house – the socially ordained ideal of feminine selflessness – in order to achieve the imaginative freedom

necessary for the best writing. Her essay reminds us that sexual and imaginative freedom are closely related, that constraints on one are felt as constraints on the other. Charlotte Brontë never totally killed the angel...The resulting conflict between her drive for imaginative expression and her conviction of the necessity of imaginative containment consequently gave her art both its limitations and its strengths. (67)

None of the heroines discussed in this dissertation is a born victor, per Janice Carlise's previous comments (even Shirley, who begins with money and station but lacks an outlet for her desire to love and be loved), but all are made such by virtue of their narratives. The self is vindicated, to greater or lesser degrees, in *Caroline*, *Shirley*, *Jane Eyre*, and *Lucy Snowe*. John Kucich posits a point of view contrary to Carol Christ in his essay:

Recently, writers as different ideologically as Michel Foucault, Carl Degler, and Nina Auerbach have argued that forms of Victorian self-control play a more positive, empowering role within subjectivity than we have come to think...For Foucault, Victorian repression becomes an injunction to discover and articulate bodily desire as an infinitely 'deep' fund of subjective power: "Let us not isolate the restrictions, reticences, evasions or silences which [Victorian sexuality] may have manifested, in



order to refer them to some constitutive taboo, psychological repression, or death instinct. What was formed was...an affirmation of self." (68-69)

As "affirmations of self" these texts are mimetic, in that they become representations of life in art, fantastic elements aside. They represent the prevailing attitudes toward women in Victorian culture, and the "heretic narratives" within confront such attitudes. Charlotte Brontë may not have "totally killed the angel," in Carol Christ's and Virginia Woolf's commentaries, but she has certainly set forth viable alternatives to that particular gendered construction of women. The texts also show (develop) alternative modes for women in Victorian and contemporary culture, a reflection of the notion that for women, the narrative space must exist before the physical space.

## Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> Nina Auerbach, *Communities of Women: An Idea in Fiction* and *Woman and the Demon: The Life of a Victorian Myth* addresses patriarchal enclosure of women in cultural roles, as does Martha Vicinus' introduction to the text *Suffer and be Still* and Lynne Agress' *The Feminine Irony: Women on Women in Early Nineteenth Century English Literature*. Agress notes not only the patriarchal enclosure of women but also how nineteenth-century women writers perpetrate such enclosures in their writing.

<sup>ii</sup> Sandra R. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, 1979.

<sup>iii</sup> This three-stage pattern is discussed by Carol Flinders in *At the Root of This Longing* to frame a kinaalda ceremony, which is a Navajo menarche ceremony. Flinders references the two critics who originate the formula for this pattern, Bruce Lincoln, *Emerging From the Chrysalis* (1981) and Virginia Beane Rutter, *Woman Changing Woman* (1993).

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<sup>iv</sup> The view of wives as their husband's spiritual keepers, if not moral betters, is reiterated in such period texts as Coventry Patmore's poem, *The Angel in the House*, John Ruskin's *Of Queen's Gardens*, and Alfred Lord Tennyson's *The Princess* (VII). These texts comment on women's power in marriage.

<sup>v</sup> Starhawk. *Dreaming the Dark: Magic, Sex and Politics*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1997. 3-4.

<sup>vi</sup> On women writers educating women, see Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *Madwoman*, ch. 2, 72-73. Also, see Elaine Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing*, ch. 1 *The Female Tradition*.

<sup>vii</sup> In the chapter "The Queen's Looking Glass," Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar note "women themselves have the power to create themselves as characters, even perhaps the power to reach toward the woman trapped on the other side of the mirror/text and help her to climb out" (16).

<sup>viii</sup> See Chapter 13 in *Jane Eyre* regarding "the men in green" (125).

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<sup>ix</sup> The footnote on p.663 of the Oxford World Classics edition of *Shirley* clarifies the use of Shirley as a masculine name. According to the note, “*The Oxford Dictionary of Christian Names* cites this novel as the occasion of the earliest use of ‘Shirley’ as a first name; hitherto it had only been used as a surname.”

<sup>x</sup> Of Shirley’s gender construction, Helene Moglen notes: To express the unique self molded by her rare good fortune, to have it perceived and responded to, Shirley must ‘play’ the conventional male: fragmenting her identity, denying herself. Experience has taught her that gender negates social and economic position. Therefore, she must try to be ‘something more’ than a woman. (176)

<sup>xi</sup> In Chapter 1, “Power–Over and Power from Within”, in *Starhawk’s Dreaming the Dark: Magic, Sex and Politics* (1982).

<sup>xii</sup> Translations of French words quoted in this text are my own.

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<sup>xiii</sup> In her Introduction to Part 1 of *Victorian Women A Documentary Account of Women's Lives in Nineteenth-Century England, France and the United States* (Hellerstein et. al.), titled "The Girl," associate editor Barbara Charlesworth Gelpi discusses the issue of personal significance for Victorian women. She notes that personal significance is linked to the cultural changes which marked the Victorian era, and furthermore, women of this period struggle with reconciling relational and personal selves (8). Gelpi's concept of relational/personal selves is evolves from Mary Douglas' theories of positional and personal families, as noted in her text *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology* (1973).

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<sup>xiv</sup> In her essay titled "Desire and Fear: Female Abjection in the Gothic Fiction of Mary Wollstonecraft," from her book *From Wollstonecraft to Stoker: Essays on Gothic and Victorian sensation fiction*, Marilyn Brock notes, "The Gothic is an important genre for representing female experience, and Romantic-era author Mary Wollstonecraft uses it to depict female subjugation in late eighteenth century culture" (17). Brock goes on to note, "Wollstonecraft's version of Gothic narrative in her unfinished novel *Maria* (1798) depicts women's social marginalization and exile to a realm of abjection in its depiction of its heroine's subjugated female body" (19). Though Brock is discussing Wollstonecraft's *Maria* and not Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*, the point regarding the feminine experience and female subjugation as part of the Gothic novel's conventions applies to the story of Pamela, as Pamela is continuously imprisoned, restrained, and her narratives are repeatedly silenced. While *Pamela* may be technically considered a novel of the sentimental genre, preceeding the Gothic novel per se, it seems fair to say that it contains elements of the Gothic.

<sup>xv</sup> See Nina Auerbach, *Woman and the Demon*, and also consider the biblical images of Eve and Lilith.

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<sup>xvi</sup> Perhaps Lucy's construction of self as mermaid has a connection to her rebirth into wisdom. According to Barbara G. Walker, in her text *The Woman's Dictionary of Symbols and Sacred Objects*, the mermaid was known in books on alchemy in the Medieval period as "The Siren of the Philosophers, crowned and lactating the milk of the enlightenment." The mermaid image may also signal her return to her Bretton/Britannic roots, as also according to Walker, "As late as the 19<sup>th</sup> century, British law claimed that all mermaids found within the home waters would be the property of the Crown" (263).

<sup>xvii</sup> Barbara Hannah's text, *Striving Towards Wholeness*, is a study of individuation in the Brontës' novels, as well as Robert Louis Stevenson and Mary Webb. Hannah addresses Charlotte Brontë's life and selected works from a Jungian perspective in chapter six of the aforementioned text.

<sup>xviii</sup> Estés, Clarissa Pinkola. *Women Who Run With the Wolves*. 377.

<sup>xix</sup> Starhawk, *Dreaming the Dark*, Chapter One, "Power-Over and Power-From-Within."

<sup>xx</sup> Locke, John, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. ,Ed. Kenneth P. Winkler. Indianapolis, Indiana: 1996. 33-36.

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<sup>xxi</sup> Lucy tells her story in her own terms via her narrative style and linguistic choices. She also tells the story on her terms, as the story is written through, and on, her body and psyche.



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