UNVEILED RAGE AND UNSPOKEN FEAR:
A STUDY OF EMOTIONAL, PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL ABUSE
IN THE JUVENILIA AND NOVELS OF CHARLOTTE BRONTË

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To My Mother
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INTRODUCTION

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, in their theory of a female aesthetic (Madwoman in the Attic, 1979), state that nineteenth-century women authors usually did not communicate meaning directly, but expressed themselves through symbol and metaphor. Their theory, along with the pioneering work on the history of women's writing by Ellen Moers and Elaine Showalter, began a search for the "subversive text" in women's literature, with Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre usually getting the most attention. Filled with erotic images, dreams, and mysterious paintings, all woven through the plot of a gothic romance, Jane Eyre became the classic text of subversive writing, and Charlotte Brontë the writer who secretly expressed rage against a society that entrapped women. Building on Gilbert and Gubar's analysis of "subversive writing," I argue in addition that in Charlotte Brontë's novels women characters exist as survivors of sexual, emotional, and physical abuse, and that her female characters' responses to and perceptions of their worlds can be seen as a response to that abuse. Analyzing Brontë's writing in this way helps to explain the rage, sadomasochism, and fear of confinement that run throughout her fiction, all
issues which have become central in feminist criticism of Brontë.

My literary analysis is founded upon two major developments in Brontë criticism: psychoanalytic criticism of Charlotte Brontë's novels (established by Helene Moglen's work *The Self Conceived* [1976])\(^1\) and the feminist critique developed by Gilbert and Gubar in the *Madwoman in the Attic* (1979).

The tradition of feminist psychoanalytic criticism of Charlotte Brontë's novels which informs my own study was established in the 1970's. This criticism defines Charlotte Brontë as a "psychological" writer and works from the belief that her conventional plot lines were used to "cover" more subversive meanings in the text, meanings which are seen through the heroine's accounts of dreams, paintings, and doubles. Helene Moglen in *The Self Conceived* (1976) is the

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\(^1\)Recent psychoanalytic studies of Charlotte Brontë's work include an extensive Freudian analysis by Dianne Sadoff (*Monsters of Affection: Dickens, Eliot & Brontë on Fatherhood*; Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1982) which bases its analysis on Freud's primal fantasy of castration, and on "the dialectic of master and slave" in Brontë's novels, where the male gaze is a form of "penetration" and the female gaze "the threat of castration." Karen Chase in her study *Eros and Psyche: The Representation of Personality in Charlotte Brontë, Charles Dickens, and George Eliot* (New York: Methuen, 1984) further develops the theme of mastery and submission, especially in the juvenilia, and analyzes the use of physical space in Brontë's work. For a Lacanian interpretation of Brontë's novels, see Christina Crosby's article "Charlotte Brontë's Haunted Text" (*Studies in English Literature*, 24, Autumn, 1984), 701-715 in which Crosby uses Lacanian notions of the Imaginary to depict Lucy's imaginary sense of wholeness and "the mirrored images and doubles" which represent her actual, fragmented self.
first of many biographer-critics to expand the labeling of Charlotte Brontë as a great nineteenth-century "romantic writer"—"...the spontaneous artist who pours forth her feelings...without premeditation" (Elaine Showalter, A Literature of Their Own, 104)—to a "psychological realist," a woman who, through plots that run like dream-sequences, works out problems of her own life and the problem of being a "woman" writer (Moglen 106). Critics who look at Charlotte Brontë’s novels as psychological texts look for the breaks in rationality in the conventional "telling" of the stories: Jane Eyre’s dreams and paintings, Rochester’s mad wife, Lucy Snowe’s breakdowns and encounters with the nun. Most feminist critics agree that Jane Eyre and Lucy Snowe are both journeying towards some kind of psychic wholeness. The same critics differ, however, on what Brontë’s heroines must fight against to achieve wholeness. The differences are based both on conflicting political views of the novels and on conflicting interpretations of the same dreams, paintings, and other "selves." Katherine Blake, in her "Review of Brontë Studies, 1975-1980," divides the interpretations into three main areas: "Mother/Child Family-Romance," "The Erotic," and "Anger and Protest" (221). The following discussion will summarize the trends in Brontë feminist criticism since the 1970’s and outline the relevance of different critiques to my own.

Moglen writes one of the first feminist psychoanalytic critiques of Brontë’s work, concentrating on the
“interaction” between Charlotte’s life and her art. According to Moglen, Brontë was unconsciously using her art to recreate herself and to understand the extent of her society’s oppression. As Brontë matures as a woman and a thinker, her novels become more revealing and explosive: from The Professor (an unsophisticated attempt to describe the Heger “romance” which shows “the gulf between Brontë’s obsession and her capacity for self-analysis” [83]), to Jane Eyre (a “feminist myth” [105], a romantic allegory which ends in “equality” by crippling the man and removing the lovers from society), to Shirley (a political commentary which connects the plight of women to the working classes), to Villette (her most “uncompromising” [195] novel, which seeks to “confront not only the meaning of her Brussels experience...but the implications of the life she was living then—and the quality of life she still had to endure” [193-4]). Moglen describes the key conflict in all of Brontë’s work as the attempt to “reconcile the heroine’s independent self-realization with her need to be submerged in the powerful, masculine ‘other’” (225). Moglen’s Brontë is never able to reconcile that conflict, either in her works (where Rochester is crippled and M. Paul dies) or in her own life—though Moglen sees a kind of reconciliation in the narrative of Jane Eyre, which, she says, works as a “feminist myth” that transforms Jane from the “dispossessed princess” of the Cinderella story (109) to the prince who kisses Rochester
awake (141), as Rochester's crippling injuries establish a relationship of equality between the two lovers.² Moglen's work validates a psychoanalytic reading of Brontë's texts because of its consistent intelligence and very convincing analysis of Brontë's psychic conflicts.

Gilbert and Gubar's Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination (1979) structures much of the previous psychoanalytic feminist psycho-social criticism into a new feminist critique which discusses both the reasons for female oppression in the nineteenth century and the ways women subverted conventional femininity in their texts. In developing this theoretical framework for nineteenth-century British women's texts, Gilbert and Gubar build on the work of Elaine Showalter and Ellen Moers, who had established a women's literary history³

²The narrative structure of Jane Eyre has been defined in a variety of ways. It has been seen as a kind of myth or fairy tale (see for example Nancy Workman's essay "Mythic Elements in Jane Eyre" [Essays in Literature, Fall 1980], in which Workman sees the underlying structure of the Thornfield section as a reworking of The Arabian Nights, with Jane as Scheherazade and Rochester as the Sultan). The narrative has also been defined as a type of feminist romance by Helene Moglen, and as a "female quest-romance" (Melodie Monahan, "Heading Out is Not Going Home: Jane Eyre" Studies in English Literature, Autumn, 1988) in which the gender of the hero overturns the tradition quest format and puts the heroine (and author) "at odds with literary and linguistic tradition (590)."

for the nineteenth century. Gilbert and Gubar’s critique develops on three main fronts: the “anxiety of authorship” for women writers (49); the “copy selves” (mainly two opposing selves: the male-constructed angel and monster) women writers have to discard before finding the “real self buried beneath” (44); and finally, the way women survived both oppression and the “anxiety of authorship”: by writing secretly subversive texts underneath what seem conventional plots (72). In effect,” say Gilbert and Gubar, “such women have created submerged meanings, meanings hidden within or behind the more accessible, ‘public’ content of their works” (72). To find those hidden meanings, Gilbert and Gubar suggest that critics search for the “madwoman” in a woman’s text -- “fiercely independent characters who seek to destroy all the patriarchal structures which both their authors and their authors’ submissive heroines seem to accept as inevitable (78)” -- and acknowledge the textual patterns of imprisonment and escape.4

The third critical trend that has shaped feminist criticism of the Brontës focuses on the issues of power and class oppression, best exemplified in the Marxist critique of Terry Eagleton, *Myths of Power: A Marxist Study of the Brontës* (1975). Eagleton sees Charlotte Brontë's struggle between repression and romantic freedom as the conflict between "blunt bourgeoisie rationality and flamboyant Romanticism" (4) and defines characters like Jane Eyre or Lucy Snowe as displaced women trying to move through the ranks of the class structure: "At the centre of all Charlotte's novels is a figure who either lacks or deliberately cuts the bonds of kinship. This leaves the self a free, blank, 'pre-social' atom: free to be injured and exploited, but free also to progress, move through the class-structure..." (26). It is Eagleton's conclusion that Brontë, at heart connected to the status quo, raises her female heroines to a higher social position by the end of each novel, to which they inherently "belong" (32). Socialist-feminist critics have chosen to look at the power

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struggle of Brontë’s female heroines in a slightly different light; how, they ask, do Brontë’s female heroines interact with patriarchy and their often crippling relationships with men? How do women earn power in a society that refuses to grant them any? The study of power in Brontë’s novels has been taken up from a variety of different angles: studying *Villette*, for example, in light of the social debate on the “woman question” in the 1830’s and 40’s, or in terms of colonialism and domination. In studying what I identify as patterns of abuse in the novels, I rely on some of these critiques to interpret the power dynamics that trap the female heroine in abusive environments.

Studying power dynamics and oppression leads immediately to the question of survival, and the fourth trend of Brontë criticism helps to explain how Brontë’s female heroines are able to receive enough nurturing to survive. Focusing primarily on *Jane Eyre*, critics like Adrienne Rich and

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Barbara Rigney have studied the mothering figures in the novel that allow Jane to maintain some sense of self esteem during her journey towards an integrated self.\(^8\) Adrienne Rich, in "Jane Eyre: The Temptations of a Motherless Woman" (Ms., October 1973), describes the women who help Jane along her journey: Bessie, who is "the first woman to show Jane affection" and gives Jane "hope for the future" (69); Miss Temple, who fosters "intellectual growth" in Jane (70); Helen, who gives Jane "a glimpse of the female character without pettiness, hysteria or self repudiation" (70); and finally, in a dream the night before she leaves Thornfield, the moon itself, "symbol of the matriarchal spirit" (106), that directs her to leave Rochester. Barbara Rigney, in her study *Madness and Sexual Politics in the Feminist Novel: Studies in Brontë, Woolf, Lessing and Atwood* (1978), expands the "mothering" theme to argue that Jane Eyre is on a search for a "mother within the self" (12). Rigney however believes that the mother-figures Rich lists are unfulfilling for

\(^8\)For a Lacanian interpretation of the mother in Jane Eyre see the chapter on Jane Eyre in Margaret Homans' study *Bearing the Word: Language and Female Experience in Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986). Homans, dividing the realm of language between "literal" female language and "figurative" male language, argues that Jane’s ultimate rejection of Mother Earth (after leaving Thornfield) is a refusal to identify herself with the "literal and the object," which allows her to maintain her "sense of self," and allows Brontë, as the writer, to continue to use "male" speech. "The writer" says Homans "must betray the mother" in order to maintain her right to figurative speech (99).
Jane (34), and that the only true mother-figure in the novel is the moon: "a cosmic force, both in the universe and in the self" (35) 9

Compared to the volumes of criticism on Jane Eyre and Villette, literary analysis of the juvenilia has been minimal, even with so much of the material now easily accessible. The juvenilia remained in the hands of Charlotte Brontë's husband, Arthur Bell, until forty years after Charlotte's death in 1895, when Bell sold most of the Brontë letters, manuscripts, and all the juvenilia to Clement Shorter, who was buying the materials for Thomas Wise. At this point it seems that both Wise and Shorter deemed the juvenilia "worthless" (Ratchford [1941] is fairly sure that most of the tiny manuscripts were left unread), and Wise turned the juvenilia into Brontë memorabilia, cutting it into parts, binding the parts of stories separately, and selling it en masse at an auction. The pieces were picked up by enthusiastic Brontë collectors and dispersed all over England and America (Ratchford xi).

Fannie Ratchford, the first scholar on record to analyze the juvenilia, spent most of her twenty years of research (1923-1941) on finding and transcribing the juvenilia.

During these years bits and pieces of the hundreds of pages of juvenilia were transcribed, mainly in two collections: Legends of Angria (published in 1933 by Fannie Ratchford and William DeVane), and the Shakespeare Head Brontë edition, published in 1936 by Thomas Wise. (The Wise edition is valuable since it records the parts of the juvenilia that have since been permanently lost). Ratchford, however, remained the only critic doing research on the Brontë stories between 1928–1941; the manuscripts were virtually ignored by other Brontë critics until 1958.

Ratchford’s work is important because she brought attention to the manuscripts and made the first major analysis of the juvenilia. She determined that the stories were not separate incidents, but a series of tales connected to each other by theme and characters. Her critical study, The Brontë’s Web of Childhood (1941), summarizes the plotlines of all the stories by Charlotte and Branwell Brontë available at that time, and includes a summary of Emily and Anne’s fantasy world Gondal, reconstructed from the few prose fragments left, and the poetry Emily wrote (supposedly about Gondal) from the age of eighteen until her death. Ratchford was one of the first critics to divide the juvenilia into specific stages: “The Young Men’s Plays” (based on the toy soldiers Branwell received from his father in June of 1826): “Our Fellows” (based on Aesop’s Fables): the “Tales of the Islanders” (begun in June of 1829, and broken down eventually
into the two separate worlds of Gondal and Glasstown) and "Angria" (begun by Branwell in 1834, and continued in Charlotte’s juvenilia until she wrote her “Farewell to Angria” in 1839) (6-10; 17; 76-77).

In the next thirty years, the Brontë manuscripts remained virtually untouched by critics. There were several reports on the availability of the manuscripts (by Mildred Christian, “A Census of Brontë Manuscripts in the United States [1948-9]), and Leslie Marchand, “An Addition to the Census of Brontë Manuscripts” (1950), and a few more transcriptions of various “unpublished” tales of Brontë juvenilia. A biography of Charlotte Brontë, The Brontë’s Secret by Charlotte Maurat, included juvenilia in its discussion of Charlotte’s early life, and Winifred Gerin’s Five Novelettes was tremendously helpful to Brontë scholars, as the first transcription of Charlotte Brontë’s five last and most sophisticated Angrian stories, written between 1836 and 1839.

The next scholar to have a major impact on Brontë juvenilia was the New Zealander Christine Alexander, who, like Fannie Ratchford, has spent years in England and America transcribing juvenilia. Her transcriptions make much of Charlotte’s earliest writing available to the public (The Early Writings of Charlotte Brontë 1826-1832, [1987]) and her study, The Early Writings of Charlotte Brontë (1983), is an explication of most of Charlotte Brontë’s juvenilia,
including many works not discussed by Ratchford. As a critic, Alexander veers away from finding "a direct relationship" between Brontë's "early and later writing," and concentrates instead on "general trends" that connect her earlier writing to later novels (1983 Edition, 4). She traces in the juvenilia the patterns of the "abandoned child" and "rivalry between two brothers," and shows how Charlotte's growing guilt over what she called the "infernal" (i.e. passionate) nature of her imaginary world forced her to move out of Angria and into more realistic fiction (Edition 213-19). Traces of that movement to more realistic fiction, says Alexander, can be seen in the last juvenilia, as Brontë, in "Henry Hawkins" and "Caroline Vernon," begins to use Yorkshire farming landscapes and dialogue instead of the romanticized Angrian versions ("Angria Reevalued" 56). As a literary analyst, Alexander is most concerned with how the juvenilia were used as apprentice work for Charlotte's later novels, and how the transition works ("Ashworth" and The Professor) helped Charlotte to bridge the gap between "Farewell to Angria" and Jane Eyre.

Literary analysis of the juvenilia in the last five years has mainly centered on aesthetic issues; in Meg Harris Williams' study, for example ("Book Magic: Aesthetic Conflicts in Charlotte Brontë's Juvenilia" [1987]), she centers on Charlotte's "constant preoccupation with the idea of literary form" (29) to show how her concept of the structures and creation of literature change throughout her
early writing. And in one of the most recent collections of Brontë’s juvenilia, *(The Juvenilia of Jane Austen and Charlotte Brontë, 1986)*, Francis Beer comments on Brontë’s “winnowing process” (8) that determines which themes in the juvenilia will eventually appear in later novels.10

Most of the scholarly work on the Brontë juvenilia has focused on transcribing and explicating the available manuscripts. Though scholars, starting with Fannie Ratchford, have linked themes in the juvenilia to Brontë’s later works, their conclusions were often questioned because of faulty transcriptions and/or their lack of access to a large percentage of Brontë manuscripts (Alexander, *Early 4*). Now that much of the transcription has been completed, the juvenilia can be used more convincingly in literary analysis, especially in explaining the origins of troubling themes in Brontë’s fiction: the eroticism and fear of male sexual power (leading sometimes to representations of sadomasochism) and the obsessive need of Brontë’s heroines for self-control.

My dissertation begins with an extended literary critique of Charlotte Brontë’s juvenilia, focusing on Brontë’s earliest writing, (1826–1832) (Chapter I), and on

her later, more sophisticated stories, the novelettes, written between 1836 and 1839 (Chapter II). In the juvenilia Brontë used fantasy to explore violence against children and the emotional trauma of death, the effects abuse has on children (and women), and the survival skills she (and later Jane Eyre and Lucy Snowe) would use to maintain sanity in dangerous, often overwhelming environments. Here, in crude form, Charlotte Brontë began to develop the psychic defense patterns that Gilbert and Gubar would later note in her novels: the obsession with self-control and repression (314) (shown in the fortresses her “young men” build to guard against the raging Ashantees, and the icy calm of the Duke of Wellington)\textsuperscript{11}; the helplessness of the child and complete dependence on the Father (Brontë’s child/victims wait helplessly for the Duke of Wellington to rescue them); and finally, as Brontë’s later fantasies become the Angrian romances, the way physical abuse turns to sexual violence against women. Brontë’s heroines, sexually exposed and unable to ward off rape, become fragmented into four types of survivors: the compliant angel (Mina Laury); the manipulator (Louisa Dance); the madwoman (Zenobia Ellrington); and the self-sufficient celibate (Elizabeth Hastings, a possible prototype for Jane Eyre).

\textsuperscript{11}The first scholar to connect Charlotte Brontë’s Duke of Wellington to the “icy” lover in Brontë’s later novels was Fannie Ratchford, in her study of the juvenilia (\textit{The Brontë’s Web of Childhood} (1941)).
The sexual, emotional, and physical trauma in the
juvenilia continues into *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, in which the
heroines battle abuse and survive intact. ¹² How realistic
their success is, however, depends on the novel. *Jane Eyre*
discussed in Chapter 3) works partly as an abused woman’s
fantasy, in which Jane (and her creator) lash out
successfully against the oppressors, and Jane completes her
journey with few psychic scars and a healthy sense of self-
worth. The novel, however, also works realistically,
documenting how adult abusers manipulate and destroy their
child/victims (Jane Eyre’s experiences at Gateshead and
Lowood).

The fourth chapter focuses on the “morose and weak”
(Gerin, *Evolution* 509) Lucy Snowe, who reflects the psychic
wounds of the abused child. Lucy, although her traumatic
past is deliberately obscured, behaves much like the
documented cases of women who have been sexually abused,
showing signs of severe depression and passivity, and
expressing the desire to become “invisible” in order to
protect herself. *Villette* is a blunt, realistic portrayal of
how an abused woman perceives the outside world.

¹²I’ve chosen to omit Shirley from this study since it
focuses more on broader issues of class and society rather
than on the psychological development of its heroines. The
Professor was omitted as well because I wanted to limit this
study to Brontë’s female heroines.
CHAPTER I

FANTASIES OF DEATH AND VIOLENCE IN THE EARLY JUVENILIA OF CHARLOTTE BRONTË (1826 - 1832)

In 1856, Mrs. Gaskell received a packet of tiny papers written in microscopic print from Charlotte Brontë’s widower, Mr. Arthur Bell Nicholls. The papers contained all the juvenilia written by the four Brontë children, including the stories and poetry Charlotte Brontë wrote between the ages of thirteen and twenty three (Alexander, Early 3). In 1895, the juvenilia were put up for auction, and separate pages of the original manuscripts were scattered all over England and America (Alexander, Early 4). It has only been in the last fifty years, with Fannie Ratchford’s groundbreaking study in 1941 and transcriptions by Winifred Gerin in the 1970’s and Christine Alexander in the 1980’s, that much of the juvenilia has been published. The huge difficulty in reading the tiny print has made transcription painstakingly slow; up to now, only two-thirds of the juvenilia has been transcribed (Alexander, Edition xx-xxi). Transcription however, is reaching completion; beginning in 1991 Garnett Publishing in New York City is planning a project to publish all the existing juvenilia by Branwell and Charlotte Brontë. Most of the work on the juvenilia so far has been editing and
transcription, with major scholars like Gerin and Alexander explaining the value of the juvenilia and explicating the texts for new readers. This discussion is one of the first in the next phase of research: a literary analysis of the published texts.

While Charlotte Brontë was creating Glasstown and Angria, her dark fantasy worlds of magic, chaos and sexual violence, she was, I maintain, subconsciously exploring her real life from a safe distance: the nightmare of deaths at Cowan Bridge School became a litany of stories in which characters are buried alive and miraculously escape. The fortitude and silence young Charlotte shows at death translate into a fantasy landscape which emphasizes exposure (characters lost in “evil deserts” (Alexander, Edition 7) and the suppression of rage (her heroes battling the wild Ashantees until the savages fall silent).

The early juvenilia are obsessed with death, an obsession which probably originates from Charlotte Brontë’s early exposure to death at Cowan Bridge School. During the winter and spring of 1825 when Brontë was ten years old, she lived through a typhoid epidemic during which two of her sisters died, Maria in May, and Elizabeth in June (Gerin, Evolution 16). The months of the epidemic also brought a daily horror: as Gerin reports, the girls were attending the funerals of their fellow students on a daily basis (Gerin, Evolution 15). Though Charlotte Brontë escaped the immediate threat of typhoid, she was I believe permanently
damaged both physically and emotionally by the experience. She insisted as an adult that the exposure to illness and lack of decent food and clothing at the school left her permanently weakened and stunted in growth; she would later call herself "deformed" (Gerin, Evolution 16). There is also evidence that Charlotte was psychologically traumatized: her closest friend, Ellen Nussey reports that six years after Cowan Bridge, Charlotte regularly had nightmares where she would see her dead sisters in her room, watching her "with remorse" (Gerin, Evolution 13). When Charlotte was sent home in June 1825 the trauma of all that death was immediately suppressed, since her father refused to say much about his young daughters' deaths and left his remaining four children to their own devices. Both her father and Miss Branwell (the aunt in residence) ate meals in separate rooms and did not have much physical or emotional contact with the children (Gerin, Evolution 22). There were no apparent behavior changes in Charlotte; if anything, she had become even more obedient, taking over the mothering role for the children that Maria had previously held (Gerin, Evolution 13). That same year, Charlotte began to write fiction; three years later, Charlotte and her brother and sisters had begun their juvenilia with a vengeance. Locking themselves up for hours in a tiny study, they would write fantasy works on scraps of paper in minuscule handwriting which only they could read (Alexander, Early 3). Though the adults knew that the children were writing, the contents of the juvenilia were
kept from them, and the children kept their fantasy writing a secret from everyone outside the Brontë Parsonage (Gerin, *Evolution* 73). Writing seems to have been the only outlet for Charlotte Brontë, the only place where, through fiction, she could tell the “truth” about her experiences.

The stories which come out of those first few years of writing are steeped in death, filled with scenes of murders, dismemberment, and entombment. The psychiatrist, Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, notes that with children exposed to death, one reaction is universal: “the fear of death, that is, the fear of a catastrophic, destructive force bearing upon me and I can’t do a thing about it” (19). And that sense of helplessness in the face of a “catastrophic, destructive force” is the predominant theme in the early adventure stories written between 1829-1833, where Charlotte mainly writes in collaboration with her brother. In these stories there is a pattern in which the main character is caught in some sort of enclosed space, usually a dungeon or cave, and forced to grapple with an overwhelming experience he is not prepared for, one which usually threatens his life.

In “An Adventure in Ireland,” for example, a weary traveler is invited to spend the night at the castle of a local nobleman. At the outset of the tale, everything seems normal, his hosts quiet and friendly, the attic room he is staying in quite pleasant. But normality disappears in the dead of night, when the traveler faces a skeleton in a white sheet looming over his bed, and is dragged into three
scenarios in which he faces his own death. There is no time for the man to escape, or to avoid what he is about to see: "In an instant" (Alexander, Edition 20) he is positioned next to a raging waterfall, and then suddenly finds himself buried in a miner’s cave, with the raging sea about to crack open the walls above him: "But in the midst of all this magnificence I felt an indescribable sense of fear and terror, for the sea raged above us, and by the awful and tumultuous noises of roaring winds and dashing waves, it seemed as if the storm was violent. And now the mossy pillars groaned beneath the pressure of the ocean, and the glittering arches seemed about to be overwhelmed. When I heard the rushing waters and saw a mighty flood rolling towards me, I gave a loud shriek of terror" (Alexander, Edition 20). Whisked away from near death, the man suddenly finds himself in a lion’s pit, about to be devoured by a raging lion, and is awakened just in time from that third death by the morning light in his room (Alexander, Edition 20-1). Being lifted from the jaws of death at the last minute is a common motif in the juvenilia, whether the threat is being burned alive ("Lord C. Wellesley’s Tale to His Brother"), shot to death ("The Poetaster"), or buried alive in a coffin ("An Extraordinary Dream"). In Charlotte’s early fantasy world of Glasstown, it is her genii (herself the Chief Genii) who both bring their hapless characters to the point of death and then save their lives so that they never
die. Later, the rescuers are switched to father-figures, especially to the Duke of Wellington. As later stories make clear, the victim (usually a child) who tries to save himself is doomed; a child’s best option is to sit and wait for his father to rescue him. Fathers are also the only ones to turn to: there are few mothers in the early stories, and the ones who do exist (like the wife of the Duke of Wellington) are as passive and helpless as the children in danger.

The trauma of death is most often represented in constant scenes of chaos. But there are also direct confrontations with death in which the spirit and “real” worlds collide. Like Cathy’s hand reaching through the window in *Wuthering Heights*, these are often surprising attempts at contact in the dead of night. But unlike the terrified Mr. Lockwood, the children in Charlotte Brontë’s stories actively pursue the dead. There is no real danger; since no one ever dies in the juvenilia, the children can playfully contact the spirit world whenever they choose. In one ghost story, the Duke tells his children that as a young boy he ignored his mother’s warnings and crept into a haunted attic room late at night: “suddenly I saw pale blue light streaming through the opening of the door. I approached it and looking through a crevice I saw a sight which I shall never forget. There were twelve skeletons standing in the middle of the cold, drear garret, clasping
each other’s bony hands so firmly that it seemed as if they could never be disunited” (Alexander, Edition 75). This strange sight coincides with the way Brontë describes her ghosts as sad, pitiful creatures. It also connects to an idea people had when first seeing the Brontë children themselves; as Gerin reports: “Throughout life, strangers who met them - even at home - remarked on the clinging nature of their love for each other: ‘clinging’ in the physical sense of holding tight together when confronted by an intruder” (Gerin, Evolution 4). Often ghosts tease their child-voyeurs, bringing them to the border between life and death. When the Duke’s two sons, for example, deliberately decide to sleep alone in the haunted attic, they are shocked by the results:

"lo, a form clothed in a shroud sat in the window seat with its ghastly glazed eyes fully fixed on us. We trembled fearfully. A faint sickness seized us when slowly it rose, and gliding noiselessly to the bedside it stretched forth one death-like hand and touched us. Its touch was like the coldest ice, a drop of that stream which is colder than ice, and thrilled us through our frames causing us to shake and tremble exceedingly. Our eyes closed and when we opened them again it was gone” (Alexander, Edition 75-6).

But in a world under Brontë’s control, even contact this close is temporary and painless.

In “The Adventures of Mon Edouard de Crack,” Charlotte goes beyond narrow escapes with death and ghosts to retell her trauma at Cowan Bridge and subsequent retreat into Glasstown in the form of a fairy tale. Edouard, a young man growing up in a French village, fulfills his life-long dream
of going to Paris when both his parents die and leave him an inheritance. At first glance, Paris meets all his glorious expectations. But looking around at the Parisians, Edouard suddenly realizes that he is surrounded by a ghastly mockery: the faces around him are living corpses—the city holds the living dead: "A lean, haggard race of mortals with sunk eyes, hollow cheeks and yellow, tawny complexions. Some were attired in the most brilliant and flowing colours, some in faded but still gaudy raiment, and others in mere tattered rags through which their blackened, withered skin, and in many instances, bleached bones could be seen peeping nastily under the filthy covering, but notwithstanding their squalid misery, even these had some gay coloured article about them, such as a yellow ribbon round the arm or a scarlet patch on the forehead" (Alexander, Edition 135). The city of Paris is like a prison, like Cowan Bridge (as Lowood in Jane Eyre), when almost half the children become stricken with typhoid, and the halls ring with the moans and coughing of the ill: "disease had thus become an inhabitant of Lowood, and death its frequent visitor; ...there was gloom and fear within its walls;...its rooms and passages steamed with hospital smells, the drug and the pastille striving vainly to overcome the effluvia of mortality" (69).

At first Edouard is only an observer of this world of death, but almost immediately after arriving in Paris, he becomes hopelessly imprisoned in it. In the first few minutes of his visit the young man's money is stolen, leaving
him penniless. He follows a stranger who suddenly appears next to him and offers him a job as a waiter in a tavern. But the “tavern” turns out to be a place of dissection. Traveling through a tunnel (through which he has to crawl on his hands and knees) he arrives in a small basement room “upon the view which the bewildered eyes of De Crack had never before beheld the likeness of. Six living anatomies were sitting upon the damp floor of a cellar. The naked walls, all covered with green slime, betokened the presence of noise and putrid vapours. Across a raised stone table, with his throat cut and otherwise dreadfully marked, lay the body of a bad man, and 3 or 4 ghastly ruffians engaged in the taking up a flag from the blood-covered floor” (Alexander, Edition 136). Edouard is trapped in this place and forced to work here for the next five years, thus becoming a co-conspirator in the violence, sharing the guilt and shame for all these deaths.

Edouard escapes this nightmare by being transferred from reality into fantasy. Walking out into the fields one day, he is suddenly whisked away by four black-bird creatures, and brought instantly to the world of the geniiis. Like the penitent before God, he comes face to face with the four chief Geniiis: “four beings of immeasurable height standing upon suns whose rays shot upward and enveloped them in mantles of fire. Their arms were outstretched and their hands clasped in tokens of unity” (Alexander, Edition 137).
Out of the darkness of the basement torture chamber he comes into this blinding, supernatural light, and is sent out of the "real-world" of Paris into the imaginary world of Angria, which seems, at his first glance, to be a kind of Eden - a forest perfumed with wildflowers and a sweet, gentle wind (Alexander, Edition 138).

Waking from his sleep, he walks closer to Glasstown, and as he does, the city which appears before him reflects the contours of the female body. This use of landscape is not unusual: Freud stated in his Interpretation of Dreams that often the dreamer will create a landscape which reflects female genitalia, dreaming for example of a muddy path through a courtyard, or a road through mountains; the imagery changing slightly dependent on the dreamer and his or her past history (Freud 118). This is the landscape, the "Eden," that Brontë creates around Glasstown:

De Crack pursued his way till he came to the brow of a very tall hill which looked down into an immense valley, so admirably cultivated and so exceedingly fertile and so remarkably beautiful that it appeared like a delightful garden. Vineyards, almond trees, orange groves, corn and rice fields, savannahs and olive woods mingling in gay paradisical confusion, the beauty of which was freshened and heightened by a very wide and deep river calmly gliding through the whole. But however much De Crack was astonished by the exquisite loveliness of the valley, he was ten thousand times more so at the sight of a city which stood in the midst and to which it formed only an embroidered belt (Alexander, Edition 138).

What we see here is one example of how Charlotte uses landscape as a psychic and female symbol: the deep valley, surrounding the city like an "embroidered belt," with a wide
river gliding through its center, gives Glasstown the shape of a female sexual organ. And the female landscape of Glasstown, like the moon and fields in Jane Eyre, provides a protective refuge for its wanderers, for it is here in Glasstown that Edouard finally finds peace. He stays in Glasstown for the rest of his life, where he remains "contented and happy" (Alexander, Edition 140).

Charlotte Brontë used landscape as symbolic language from the age of thirteen (March of 1829) when she first began writing her fantasy stories in earnest. From the first crudely drawn, often disjointed stories, a landscape appears which I interpret as a map of the young writer's psyche. In the beginning of the Glasstown saga, twelve adventurers are forced onto land by a raging south sea (which is so violent that they cannot travel on it by their own strength). Trapped on this strange continent, they see they are on a fertile plain, bordered to the north by huge mountains, to the east by great forests, and to the west by evil deserts. The mountains to the north, the Jibbal Kumri ("Mountains of the Moon") loom over the travelers, like the forests and desert, barring any escape from the exposed plain. Realizing their limited choices, the weary travelers decide immediately to build a camp on the central plain.

But just as the men prepare to move inland, they are attacked by the evil Ashantees, black, powerful, raging men who remain silent: "The chief was quite black and very tall; he had a fierce countenance and the finest eyes I ever saw."
We asked him what his name was, but he would not speak” (Alexander, *Edition* 10-11). They finally beat down the Ashantees who surrender, allowing the invaders to build their fortress. The adventurers secure a temporary peace when they return the captured chief to the tribe and their own terms are met: “This we accepted, as it was on terms most advantageous to ourselves” (Alexander, *Edition* 11). Here Charlotte the child is using fantasy to describe her own bargaining with the rage of all that death, and her success in suppressing that rage. The fight against rage continues symbolically throughout the juvenilia; the father-figures are always subduing rebellion, the Duke using bloodhounds to control rebellious children, Zamorna frequently fighting for his life against the evil Ashantees. And Charlotte, either as a child-genii or sympathetic writer, always sides with the suppressors, though her support often can become teasing (as in Charles’ portrayal of his brother, the Marquis of Douro), or ironic (Charlotte’s later negative descriptions of Zamorna in the novolettes). The need for suppression, or self-control of rage (the source for doubling in Gilbert and Gubar’s analysis of *Jane Eyre*) was a dominant motif in Charlotte Brontë’s work from the time she began writing at the age of thirteen.

It’s important to see at this point how the suppression is implied not only symbolically, but through character portrayal. Charlotte’s hero in the juvenilia, the Duke of Wellington, is best described as the master controller of
chaos. In the essay of 1829 extolling the Duke’s great personality traits, the narrator is most impressed by the Duke’s tremendous ability to keep a calm front, suppressing any worry, grief, or rage, and completely masking his emotions from those around him: his face “wears the same still smile and calm dignity which never for a moment forsook it, even in the mortal struggle and earthquake shock of battle” (Alexander, Edition 89). Throughout the early juvenilia (1826-1832) the Duke is sometimes moved to great rage, but immediately suppresses all his emotion and acts with perfect calm, courage, and great logic. And that self-control is central to the Duke’s main role in Glasstown. As father-figure and disciplinarian, the Duke keeps the unruly members of the government in check, handles the army, quashes any rebellion, and keeps everyone, including women, in his or her place.

In most of the adventure stories from 1826 to 1832 the overall landscape of the fantasy world appears in different variations. The action usually takes place in some sort of broken house, lean-to, or tower. Behind the house is a huge looming rock: on the other sides are usually a forest and not deserts, but rounded rolling hills. Bordering all of this is water: sometimes a stream, sometimes a raging river, sometimes the ocean itself. Here for example, is the description of the hut the Duke of Wellington’s two sons hide in during the rebellion of the children in Vision Island:
“The hut of the Marquis of Douro and Lord Wellesley was built
beneath the shade of a spreading oak. A tremendous rock rose above it. On one side was a gently swelling hill, on the other a grove of tall trees and before it ran a clear rippling stream” (Alexander, Edition 103). As the stories develop the earth and sky of Glasstown become part of the female domain. In “The Strange Incident in the Duke of Wellington’s Life” (1829), for example, the Duke and his party, who are lost on the moors, look up to see that the sky has turned into a huge ocean: “We continued on this plain till we lost sight of everything else and then suddenly perceived the whole aspect of the sky to be changed. It assumed the appearance of large rolling waves, created with white foam. Also we could hear a thundering sound, like the roaring of the sea at a distance, and the moon seemed a great globe of many miles in diameter” (Alexander, Edition 105). Like the moon in Jane Eyre, the mystical sky and moon of Glasstown often serve to guide the travelers; in this story, for example, a genius comes out of the roaring sky and leads the Duke to his missing sons.

As the stories in the juvenilia develop, Brontë makes a clear distinction between the natural, female world and the interior fortresses her characters inhabit: the marble palaces, with their huge domed drafty halls supported by giant pillars—seats of power inhabited by men and genii. The castles, as Charlotte will describe later when Glasstown turns into Angria, are male enclaves and female prisons. The
men (the Duke of Wellington, Zamorna) are always busy on the inside of these enclaves, signing documents, holding important meetings; the women, always at the windows, looking outside. The building as symbolically male is developed early. Here, from a story in 1829 ("Tale to his Sons"), is a description of the Duke's study, as the Duke is talking with his two sons:

It was a beautiful evening in the month of August, when the Duke of Wellington and his sons were seated in a small private parlour at the top of the great round tower at Strathfeldsay. The sun was just setting and its beams shone through the gothic window, half-veiled by a green, velvet curtain which had fallen from the golden supports and hung in rich festoons, with a glowing brilliance equal to the crimson light which streams from the oriental ruby, but, unlike to that beautiful gem, it was every moment decreasing in splendour, till at length only a faint rose tint remained on the marble pedestal, which stood opposite bearing the statue of William Pitt and which, but a little while ago, had shone with a brightness resembling the lustre (of) burnished gold (Alexander, Edition 106).

The room (at the top of a round tower) is accessible only to the Duke, his sons, and close male friends (a "private" room). Statues are common in these palaces, and here in this room of the Duke is the statue of William Pitt (English Prime Minister from 1783-1801 during the outbreak of the French Revolution) (Alexander, Edition 106). The depiction of the palace as the enclave of male power and the outdoors as the female world is especially clear in "Review of the Chief Genii in Council, by Edward DeLisle," in which a portrait of the genii is discussed. Inside "The Genii are seated upon thrones of pure and massive gold, in the midst of
an immense hall surrounded by pillars of fine and brilliant diamond." Outside the room " this land of rose and myrtle tree, all adorned with smiling plains and crystal lakes in which the white water-lily floats and the flowering reed grows stately on its green banks among vines and sweet blossoms laurel trees, while gentle hills rise in the distance...the whole calm, fair and beautiful land is sleeping beneath the light of a full clear moon, shining in the midst of an unclouded heaven" (Alexander, Edition 114). As Brontë moves away from magic and fantasy, and shifts the power base from genii to men (the Duke of Wellington, his son Zamorna), the action moves from the moors and fields to the rooms of palaces, so that by the later Angrian stories, the action is almost completely centered on women locked inside palace walls.

Glasstown (and later Angria) are in continual chaos and sporadic violence; in both worlds people are suddenly swept away into situations which bring them to the point of death. The most common response to these crises is silent endurance: waiting for someone (usually a genii or father figure) to come to the rescue. But what happens when the child/victim tries to fight back? Brontë makes her point quite clearly: rebellion is useless; children who fight are completely overpowered by the adults who stand against them. There are two examples of rebellion by children against authority figures which occur very early in the juvenilia: one is the
story of the tiny creature, Raton; the other, the story of
the rebellious children on Vision Island.

"Raton’s Attempt," written in June 1829, is the only
story in five years of fables about Glasstown and Angria in
which someone tries to kill the father--in this case, the
ideal father-figure, the Duke of Wellington. It's a
fascinating fable not only for what it says about the
vulnerability of children, but also because of the direct
intervention in the story of Charlotte and Emily Brontë.
Raton’s adventures begin with the meeting between three
creatures who are planning to kill the Duke. All three are
tiny creatures (the biggest "about two feet long") who
masquerade as adults, one as a "lawyer" (powerbroker,
persuader), one as a victim (dressed in "sackcloth"), one as
an official observer (the "reporter"). The costumes are so
big that the creatures seem laughable, like children in
grownups’ clothes: "Tol is dressed in a lawyer’s gown and a
huge wig, which reaches to his feet and wraps round him. Rat
is attired in a coarse piece of sackcloth, tied round the
neck and feet with rope and having the appearance of a tail
and ears, and Tom is dressed in the dress of a reporter". The victim ("Raton") is elected to sneak into the castle and
kill the Duke, but he is constantly mocked by the narrator
and other characters for his physical size ("the spiteful
creature did not reach higher than the grass"), a serious
defect in a fantasy world where height equals power
(Alexander, Edition 25-6). The tale implies that Raton (the
rat -- a disgusting immoral creature that would try to kill a king/the bad child who wants to kill the father) is obviously too weak to accomplish this task.

And he would be too weak on his own merits. Fortunately for him, he is helped by the child-writers Charlotte and Emily, who appear directly in this fantasy world as “little queens” to throw Raton over the castle gate and invisibly watch his progress. Their reason, they say, is curiosity: “As we wished to see the end of this adventure, we took Raton up and threw him over the high wall, and then knocked at the gate” (Alexander, Edition 27). The “little queens” appear quite frequently in the early juvenilia, but mainly as guides and loyal supporters to the Duke of Wellington, so trusted that they can appear in his private chambers at will. As supernatural creatures who can make themselves invisible and have, like the genii, the power of healing, they serve mainly to warn the Duke of any danger and protect his sons from harm. Thus it is quite strange to see the “little queens” following Raton, watching passively as he poisons the Duke’s water jug, and saying nothing as the Duke drinks from it. The Duke is saved of course, at the last moment, by a mysterious genii, and Raton is able to escape from the Duke’s clutches and hide out in the home of his own father. The little queens, remaining invisible, are never noticed throughout the story. This story can be interpreted symbolically as a way the child-writers have of expressing rage against their own father and against father-figures like
Brocklehurst; murderous rage, as Freud says, is common for children once they become aware of their own powerlessness. The anger, Freud says, does not mean murderous intent: “To children, who, moreover, are spared the sight of the scenes of suffering which precede death, being ‘dead’ means approximately the same as being ‘gone’ – not troubling the survivors any longer” (Freud, 288). The Brontë’s own father through his neglect may have made this anger even more violent; there are several scenes in the juvenilia where the “little queens” are demanding attention from the Duke, and become fiercely irritable when the Duke ignores them.

What “Raton’s Attempt” shows most of all is that open rebellion is useless; the system (designed by the Brontë children themselves) is set up to protect those in power, however brutal or repressive they may become. Charlotte Brontë as a writer creates an extremely violent fantasy world in which the weak are constantly attacked, and then she transfers the control over the violence (and responsibility for it) from herself to the Duke of Wellington. In this defense fantasy Brontë gives up her power voluntarily, which hinders the father from taking it from her, and maintains her power of choice. (Longenecker 1). Both the dynamics of child/father power, and the transfer of control from child to father are seen in the stories of Vision Island, Part one from Tales of the Islanders, Volume I (June, 1829), and its
continuation in Volume 2, "The School Rebellion" (October, 1829).

Vision Island is a place of great natural beauty inhabited by children who are locked up in dungeons. In the center of the island is "a magnificent palace of pure white marble, whose elegant and finely wrought pillars and majestic turrets seem the work of mighty genii and not of feeble men" (Alexander, Edition 23). The Greek architecture symbolizes both purity and intellectual distance, what the great father/figure, the Duke of Wellington, represents as he passes judgment over the unruly men and children under his control. And long before Mr. Brocklehurst is represented as a black pillar/phallus in Jane Eyre, Charlotte Brontë uses the pillar as a way of describing male phallic power. When men in Angria or Glasstown want to assert power over women, they loom over their victims, casting shadows from their great height. In the Angrian story Captain Henry Hastings for example, Elizabeth Hastings is prevented from helping her brother escape when she is physically threatened by her captor, Lord Hartford: "she was obliged to retreat - still she did not yield - she only backed as the Baron advanced - a little overawed by his towering stature & threatening look" (Gerin, Novelettes 146).

A Description of Vision Island goes on to describe the interior of the palace: "Ascending a flight of marble steps, you come to a grand entrance which leads into a hall surrounded by Corinthian pillars of white marble. In the
midst of the hall is a colossal statue holding in each hand a
vase of crystal, from which rushes a stream of clear water
and breaking into a thousand diamonds and pearls falls into a
basin of pure gold, and finally disappearing through an
opening rises again in different parts of the park in the
form of brilliant fountains...” (Alexander, Edition 23). If
the great marble hall can be seen as a representation of male
power, the statue holding water represents the female,
strategically located in front of the hidden door leading to
the childrens’ torture chamber. Through the litany of
stories of children being beaten, kidnapped, buried alive,
and tortured, women appear infrequently if at all. Those
women/mothers who do appear are usually inadequate, like the
mother of the Duke of Wellington’s two sons who is unable to
discipline her servants and behaves in a way that is “simple-
minded” (Alexander, Edition 201). In later juvenilia, women
who are physically threatened tremble helplessly and beg for
mercy from their violators, and Charlotte will often compare
them in their helpless states to marble statues. After Mina
Laury is attacked by Lord Hartford, Charlotte writes:
“Hartford saw that she turned pale & he felt her tremble
violently - his arms relaxed their hold - he allowed her to
leave him - She sat down on a chair opposite - & hurriedly
wiped her brow which was damp & marble pale -”(Gerin,
Novelettes 146). In all of these stories it is the men (or
the male genii) who provide help to those in distress; women
are either nonexistent or useless.
"A Description of Vision Island" continues as Brontë moves the reader into the dungeon:

...behind a statue, is a small door, over which is drawn a curtain of white silk. This door, when opened, discovers a small apartment at the farther end of which is a very large, iron door, which leads to a long, dark passage, at the end of which is a flight of steps leading to a subterranean dungeon, which...has the appearance of a wide vault, dimly lighted by a lamp (? of asphalt), which casts a strange, death-like lustre over part of the dungeon and leaves the rest in the gloom and darkness of midnight. In the middle is a slab of black marble, supported by four pillars of the same. At the head of it stands a throne of iron. In several parts of this vault are instruments of torture....At the end of this dungeon is the entrance to the cells....These cells are dark, vaulted, arched and so far down in the earth that the loudest shriek could not be heard by any inhabitant of the upper world...{(Alexander, Edition 24).

This image of seeming innocence ("a curtain of white silk") leading to horror (the iron door and steps to a dungeon) are constant refrains in other fantasy stories of this period, where men and children wandering alone are entrapped suddenly in dungeons ("The Keep of the Bridge") or tunnels leading to lands of death ("The Search After Happiness") or exotic torture chambers ("The Adventures of Mon Edouard de Crack"). And the children, like most children in the early tales, are coldly placed in brutal conditions in which their welfare is at the mercy of whimsical, often brutal adults. Here, for example, when the children are in the care of the Duke's two sons: "they lead (the children) into the most wildest and most dangerous parts of the country, leaping rocks, precipices, chasms, etc., and little caring whether the children go before or stop behind, and
finally coming home with about a dozen wanting, who are found a few days after in hedges or ditches with legs or head broken, and affording a fine field for Sir A. Hume, Sir A. Cooper and Sir H. Halford to display their different modes of setting and trepanning, etc.” (Alexander, Edition 25).

It is from this kind of sporadic brutality that the children rebel, overthrowing the Duke’s sons and running riot on the island. But the young writers have little sympathy for the rebellious children. The children are the enemy, unsympathetic creatures who, like the wild Ashantees, have to be restrained by violence in order to be kept under control. Charlotte and Emily have been in control of the brutality from the beginning: “in these, as well as the dungeons, the most unjust torturing might go on without any fear of detection, if it was not that I keep the key of the dungeon and Emily keeps the key of the cells, and the huge, strong, iron entrances will brave any assault, except with lawful instruments” (Alexander, Edition 24). And from the beginning the two girls have given power over to the Duke, at first in name only; but once the violence begins, the Duke has complete control. Under his orders, the little queens call up more bloodhounds and bring back the tortuous Doctor Hume. And they stay faithfully by the tent of the Duke’s wounded sons as the Duke threatens the children with bloodhounds and coerces their surrender. The calm, ruthless demand of the Duke (always tightly controlled, always calm) for control wins over the violent reaction of the children. Assenters
and participants, Charlotte and Emily side completely with the Duke. As a reward for their complete subservience (including their miraculous healing of the Duke's son), the little queens receive a ring from the Duke, like vassals receiving homage from their king: "...the Duke drew from his finger a diamond ring and presented it to us. This we accepted and thanked him for it" (Alexander, Edition 100). In accepting the ring, Charlotte (as a "little queen") is also accepting a power relationship with the Duke, in which she is the grateful vassal, and he, the all powerful king.

This "ring ceremony" also has Oedipal overtones (Longenecker 1), as the daughter/lover/wife receives the ring (the sexual favors of her "master/father) in exchange for her agreement to remain powerless. The now helpless "little queen" (little girl) captures the everlasting devotion of her father, hoping to save herself from abandonment. But as the relationship between the "little queens" and the Duke continues, it's clear that the "little queens" can never receive the Duke's love: the more they help him (usually to save his sons), the more they are ignored. The Duke showers attention on his two sons, The Marquis of Douro and Charles Wellesley, telling them stories, rescuing them from danger, listening to their (often inane) opinions. The "little queens" however (and sometimes the "little king"), receive only his icy regard. This distanced father-daughter relationship (which may reflect Brontë's subconscious fury at seeing her "idolized" brother monopolize her father's limited
attention) is repeated in the love stories Brontë writes as an adolescent. Here, in the melodramatic world of Angria, the sexuality toned down in the early juvenilia is presented openly: the "ring ceremony" is replaced by adult/child rape, and the "cold" Duke of Wellington becomes the Byronic lover Zamorna, who constantly abandons a score of women who remain hopelessly devoted to him.
CHAPTER II

INCEST AND RAGE IN CHARLOTTE BRONTË’S NOVELETTES
(1836 – 1839)

Brontë’s novelettes (written between 1836 and 1839, and considered the most sophisticated writing in her juvenilia) are often dismissed by critics as immature attempts at Byronic romance which precede her decision to focus more on realism (thus the attention given to “Farewell to Angria” and the works she begins immediately afterwards, Ashworth and The Professor). But as we’ll see, these love stories are not as conventional as they first appear, for they focus not on Zamorna, but on his abandoned, masochistic lovers, whose stories expose the vulnerability of women to rape, incest, and overwhelming rage.

In Brontë’s symbolic world, the house is a male preserve and a prison for women. Women characters are rarely seen outside their homes: Louisa Dance is under house-arrest in Hawkscliffe, Mina Laury rarely leaves the Cross of Rivaulx (Zamorna’s military headquarters), and Zenobia Ellrington, the Bertha-like character in Angria, stays in self-imposed exile at her husband’s estate. If we accept the convention that a woman’s house can be a metaphor for her body (Freud 389-90), an analysis of woman’s space in the novels

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is both revealing and disturbing. No woman in Angria has private space; every room, including her bedroom, can be intruded upon, and often a woman is threatened after a man appears suddenly in her bedroom (Passing Events), or steals into a room she had run to for safety (Caroline Vernon). Even when a woman is physically alone, she is often being watched; when Elizabeth Hastings, for example, paces back and forth in front of a picture window, she is being scrutinized both by her brother and the male narrator, who is watching her from the bushes. The fact that these women have no private space connects to the idea that their bodies are property, open to the man (or men) who claim them.

Houses imply symbolically how exposed these women are: Mina Laury, for example, Zamorna’s angelic and everpleasing mistress, is a caretaker of a house in which the doors are always open (“Within this, in fine weather the door is constantly open & reveals a noble passage, almost a Hall, terminating in a staircase of low white steps, traced up the middle by a brilliant carpet...the mansion whose windows are up, its door as usual hospitably apart” (42-3).¹ Freud’s dream analysis of his patients found that staircases and a hallway in dreams often meant a sexual act (228), and in Brontë’s fantasy writing, stairs always appear when a

¹All quotations from Brontë’s novelettes are taken from Winifred Gerin’s Charlotte Brontë: Five Novelettes (London: The Folio Press, 1971).
character is being led into some form of danger. Stairs in the early juvenilia lead to a dungeon, a torture chamber, or some kind of tomb (the victim usually walks through a hallway and down stairs before confronting some new horror). Mina’s role in this house is to serve as a caretaker/hostess of all the men who appear (Zamorna’s military friends) at sudden notice. And more importantly, her job, as she deigns it, is to make this house satisfying to her lover’s needs, submitting all her desires to make him comfortable: “it gave me a feeling of extasy to hear my young master’s voice, as he spoke to you or Arundel or to that stately Hartford, & to see him moving about secure & powerful in his stronghold” (45). Her house then, and symbolically, her body, are both his “stronghold”; and in giving away her body, she has given up her soul—becoming “self-less” as Gilbert & Gubar define it, “with all the moral and psychological implications that word suggests” (21). She is an extension of his estate, a piece of his property, and as such, cannot leave his house. When Zamorna’s friends warn Mina of the invading army and beg her to leave the estate, she persistently ignores them. “Never as my master compels me,” she says, “his land is my land” (44).

With this submissiveness in mind, the scene where lecherous Lord Hartford invites himself into Mina’s house (and body) is not that surprising, since Hartford has assumed that since Mina is “open” to Zamorna’s needs, she will be compliant to his as well. Brontë emphasizes Mina’s
vulnerability at the beginning of this scene; it opens with
Mina walking alone on her estate, a tiny figure passing over
a huge, green lawn. The passage contains imagery used later
in *Jane Eyre* and describes a landscape that builds into a
female sexual symbol:

The forest of Hawkscliffe was as still as a tomb, &
its black leafless wilds stretched away in the
distance and cut off, with a harsh serrated line, the
sky from the country--That sky was all silver blue--
pierced here & there with a star like a diamond,
only the moon softened it, large, full, golden--the
by-road I have spoken of received her ascending beam
on a path of perfect solitude--Spectral pines & great
old beech trees guarded the way like Sentinels from
Hawkscliffe--farther on, the rude track wound deep
into the shades of the forest, but here it was open &
the worn causeway bleached with frost ran under an old
wall--grown over with moss & wild ivy.
(140-1)

This path suggests female sexuality: lined with trees on
either side it splits a huge lawn in two, and is the means
Hartford (on his rushing horse) uses to reach Mina. Walking
in this pathway Mina is in a female landscape which both
reflects her body and nurtures it, the moon lighting her path
as she walks along and bathing her in moonlight as she stands
in front of her house. But this female landscape is as
passive and helpless as Mina herself: the light that shines
on her also leads Hartford to her more quickly, and the earth
cannot protect Mina as Hartford attacks her inside the house,
leaving her to beg and plead for his mercy. The landscape is
also victimized by men; as the women characters in Angria are
warding off rape, the "female" earth is in danger as well, as
Zamorna decimates Angria in his war with the Ashantees.
"Where is my capital, (the voice of Angria says) besieged, stormed, taken, a broken wall a dwelling for negroes. Where are my towns? ruined. my fields? barren. my commerce? annihilated" (76).

The houses and lands around these women characters symbolically portray how vulnerable they are to the sexual advances of men. This vulnerability is even more emphasized in their physical bodies. Most of them are locked inside the bodies of children, bodies too small and fragile to defend against what is defined as the "naked aggression" (101) of their "lovers" Zamorna and Northangerland.

The child advanced promptly. Relieved of her wrapping, she appeared exceedingly tiny; but was a neat, completely fashioned little figure, light, slight, and straight. Seated on my godmother's ample lap, she looked a mere doll; her neck, delicate as wax, her head of silky curls, increased, I thought, the resemblance (12).

This description of the ten-year-old Polly Hume in Villette matches almost perfectly the description of the female heroines in the Angrian tales: pale, tiny, beautifully dressed dolls, a mixture of grown women and little girls. Like Polly, they are physically fragile creatures whose necks could break like wax. Their bodies betray them; they are too small to defend themselves (the fiery Louisa Dance is laughable when she only comes up to Zamorna's elbow) and too weak to fight for their own needs (Mary Percy is left to freeze after her portly husband takes up all the space in front of the fire). Like the tiny adventurers against the
giant geniis of Glasstown, these women cannot fight equally, and if cajoling and sweet-talk are not successful, they must obey their masters/lovers in order to survive. When Mary Percy wants to follow her husband, Zamorna (who is off to see his mistress), she begs and cries, but is finally talked into obedience: "You may well clasp those small, silly hands—so thin I can almost see through them—and you may well shake your curls over your face—to hide its paleness from me I suppose....Look at that weather and tell me if it is fit for a delicate little woman like you to be exposed to?" (131).

And yet, what makes these women helpless makes them infinitely desirable to men. Brontë makes it clear that Angrian men are most attracted to women who resemble children; it is their childish bodies which make these women appealing, their "tiny hands" and "slender feet" (302), their weakness compared to male strength. Zamorna, when tender, calls his wife and two mistresses "little girls" (48), and it is when these women are trembling and frightened that he is most desirous of them. Suggestions of father/daughter incest, subdued in Villette (where Polly Hume caresses her father and clumsily makes his tea, behaving more like a wife than a daughter), are full-blown in the juvenilia, where the common desire of these Byronic men is at least symbolically to rape a little girl.

In this, Brontë's fantasy world of Angria is very similar to Victorian pornography, in which "the cult of the
little girl" (Rush 56) was at its height, and the greatest ecstasy in pornography was for a man to rape a young virgin, "the younger the better" (Marcus 156). A thriving prostitution market provided the product; as Stephen Marcus states in _The Other Victorians_, "there was a considerable trade in the bodies of children that had been going on for years in London" (156). That "trade" included an international white slave market that serviced men in Europe and America (Rush 63), and a thriving prostitution ring in London, in which young girls were kidnapped, raped, and then sold to wealthy Englishmen for a price: "twenty pounds for a healthy working girl between the ages of fourteen and eighteen; a hundred pounds for a middle-class girl of the the same age; and as much as four hundred pounds for a child from the upper class under age twelve" (Marcus 64). One man stopped his meetings with child-prostitutes when he walked into the room to find his own daughter, whom he had sent to school that morning, "bound, gagged and stripped awaiting him on the bed" (Rush 71).

In Angria the women are considered sexually attractive if they look and behave like little girls. If adult women are defined by men (and by themselves) as sexual objects, and if child-like women are desirable, little girls would be perceived in Angrian society as sexual objects as well. There is one child/woman story that occurs throughout the novelettes which illustrates this point: the story of Caroline Vernon and her mother, Louisa Dance. Brontë makes
it clear from the beginning that this is a love story between a child and an adult. The story begins with the father, Northangerland, receiving a proposal of marriage for fifteen-year-old Caroline from the black Ashanteer Quashia (who represents, in Brontë’s juvenilia, male rage and lust). Quashia’s description of himself as the perfect child-lover develops the love theme of the story: “...she’s young, you say, the more need she has of a father & won’t I be both father & Husband to her in one?” (284).

The story of Caroline Vernon’s seduction begins earlier, when Caroline is still a child. The first meeting between Zamorna and Caroline Vernon (in Julia) begins with a description of Zamorna’s bedroom: a room that combines both the imagery of the red room in Jane Eyre with the phallic/palace rooms in earlier juvenilia: “...a large chamber, with a wide & lofty state bed--windows shrouded in blinds, crimson carpets & curtains-- & in four niches as many figures of marble, each holding out a bright candlestick that glittered strongly through the gloom” (111). Zamorna is sleeping in a little office off from this main room, separate from the entrance hall, and similar to the dungeon off the main palatial entranceway in Vision Island.

In the classic incest story it is the child who wakes up, either in early dawn or late at night, to find her father/uncle/molester by her bed. In Brontë’s novelette Julia, Zamorna is awakened in his dark, moonlit room by the appearance of the child; the child is the intruder, the
unknowing sexual temptress, and the adult must control his immediate, sexual desire for the child. As ten-year-old Caroline creeps into Zamorna's room he calls out her name, and the child, eager to meet him, jumps into his lap: "... come here, child" -- The little girl needed no second invitation - in trembling excitement she sprang into the tall Officer's arms -- Her nature was seen at once -- her whole constitutional turn of feeling revealed itself--She cried & shook, & in answer to some soothing endearment clasped him in her childish embrace..." (114). Zamorna on feeling the child on his lap, is overcome with sexual excitement, partly because he has been fantasizing about his wife before Caroline arrived, and partly because Caroline reminds him of his wife (they are half-sisters, both sharing the same father). In fact, throughout both seduction scenes, Zamorna is amazed by the reflection of his wife in this child. He says, "You will make much such a woman as your half-sister Mary I fancy--child, I could almost imagine it was her little hand that clasped mine so" (Gerin, Novelettes 115). As Caroline babbles away happily, expressing her innocent desire to be his wife, 'That's your wife--am I like your wife? when I'm old enough I'll marry you--" (115). Zamorna holds back his desires, though the repression is difficult: "The brightening moonlight, clearly revealed her features. That eye now bent on them, could distinctly trace even in their imperfect symmetry a foreign wildness, a resemblance which stirred sensations in his heart he would have died rather
than yielded to - Sensations he had long thought routed out--but 'Heat and Frost and Thunder had only withered the stems, the roots still remained'" (114).

This first meeting between Zamorna and Caroline is broken up by the appearance of Caroline's mother, Louisa Vernon; not by her angry reaction to the scene but by her deliberately ignoring it--like many mothers in incest situations, she sees the abuse, is afraid of disturbing the status quo, and behaves as if nothing has happened: "This singular little woman...paused at the threshold. 'It is dark,' she said 'I dare not come in.' 'Why madam?' asked her royal jailor as coolly as if he & she had been acquaintances of a century--she uttered a slight exclamation at his voice--'Oh God--I feel frightened!" (115) Louisa is finally cajoled into the room, and on entering it, throws Caroline out immediately. Caroline, angry at the dismissal, refuses, until she is ordered to comply by Zamorna. The child, as she is shown here, often wants the attention from the abuser on some level, and is angry at the mother for disturbing the affection. Her message to her mother: "I don't thank you, Mamma" (115) begins an all-out war for Zamorna's affection between mother and daughter which continues until Caroline's seduction by Zamorna at the age of fifteen. And as Brontë makes clear, Caroline's mother is silently recording the sexual play between the two for the next six years, blaming the flirtation not on Zamorna, but on her child. It is
Caroline upon whom she takes out her wrath, and Caroline whom she calls a whore, as in the scene where Louisa openly condemns her daughter in front of Zamorna and Caroline’s father, Northangerland: “I’ll tell you all—” almost screamed her ladyship—“I’ll lay bare the whole vile scheme—your father shall know you, Miss—what you are & what he is—I never mentioned the subject before, but I’ve noticed, & I’ve laid it all up & nobody shall hinder me from proclaiming your baseness aloud” (307).

Why would a mother attack her daughter like this, instead of protecting her? The reasons are common for mothers of incest survivors: the overwhelming power of the male/abuser and sexual jealousy. Brontë spends a lot of time in Julia explaining Louisa’s powerlessness—as Northangerland’s mistress, Louisa is completely dependent, financially and emotionally, on her lover. When Northangerland rebels against Zamorna and begins civil war in Angria, Louisa becomes a political pawn, and at the time of this first seduction, is under house arrest in Zamorna’s keeping. After Zamorna wins the civil war, Northangerland drops his mistress completely, and Louisa becomes the dependent of Zamorna: she lives in Zamorna’s house, and Zamorna becomes the guardian of her daughter Caroline. Locked in this position, Louisa has no more power than the spouse of an abusive husband; she remains financially dependent on him, his virtual “prisoner.” And as Brontë
shows in *Julia*, open confrontation with the abuser/lover/provider proves dangerous and futile.

Louisa learns early that battling the abuser is useless: those in charge are the same ones who abuse and have no interest in her complaints. Like the child who realizes that the “good daddy” who enforces authority during the day is “bad daddy” who molests her at night, Louisa in her first conversation with Zamorna sees the futility of going to her guardian for protection. She complains about her guard, Enara, a “dark man” (111) who (as the reader knows) is one of Zamorna’s closest cronies who carries out his most violent deeds: “That brute, that Enara, in whose—hands you placed me on purpose that I might be maltreated—he has made my life not worth preserving—“Indeed,” was the concise reply. “Yes indeed—I’ve had to scream out, so as to alarm the whole house, and his savage ferocity has thrown me into fits more than once” (116). The insinuations Louisa makes here of physical, if not sexual, abuse are laughed off by Zamorna; and her awareness of her desperate position makes Louisa try other means; she flatters, she cajoles, she weeps, and finally, to persuade Zamorna to take her out of his captivity, she begins to scream: “...she started to her feet and uttered a frightful cry—it was such a one as from its shrill prolonged wildness could not but strike horror into all who heard it. Before Zamorna could stop her, another, and another followed, louder, more urgently agonized—he was infuriated—he seized both her hands with a grasp like a
vice. 'By--G-d Madam," he said, "Squeak again, and I will give you cause for the out-cry, as sure as you are a living woman" (118). The scream brings on three of Zamorna's men, Enara, his servant Rosier, and a looker on, all three of whom promise silence to Zamorna and leave quietly. And so, as in the classic incest story, Louisa's only hope is to please the powerful abuser, earn his pity and kindness, which she gains by the end of the scene through profuse apologies.

By the time the crisis ends, Louisa is maintained in one of Zamorna's houses with her daughter, Caroline; her old lover, Northangerland, has disappeared from the scene, and Zamorna has taken the place of father to the family; he pays the bills, he directs the little girl's studies and acts as her legal guardian. Louisa has determined that her power base with Zamorna would be stronger if she were involved with him sexually, and has attempted long and unsuccessfully to seduce him. Her main problem is that Zamorna is attracted to her teenage daughter, Caroline.

In the art created by sexually abused children, adolescent girls often draw pictures of themselves and their mothers side by side; with the girl mimicking a sexuality well beyond her years, a bigger bust than her mother, a mouth full of lipstick - the drawings of mother and daughter become so interchangeable that it is hard to tell the two women apart. Here, for example, is the drawing of one teenage girl:
Although the mother is labeled the winner she is depicted as an old hag. The daughter, the more beautiful of the two figures, is labeled the loser but, according to the girl, was really the ‘winner.’ Upon closer investigation it was evident that the girl and her mother were in competition with each other regarding the father’s attentions, particularly sexual ones. The girl was enjoying this attention from the father, whereas the mother became increasingly jealous, feeling rejected by her husband” (Malchiodi 145-6).

In Brontë’s version of the mother-daughter sexual rivalry, the girl (Caroline) and the father (Zamorna) are not conscious of their sexual desires; it is only Louisa who is clearly aware of the triangle and is acting upon it. Louisa forces her daughter to wear clothing which hides her developing body: “this young lady’s dress by no means accorded with her years & stature, the short-sleeved frock, worked trousers & streaming sash would have better suited the age of nine or ten than of fifteen” (305). The mother refuses to buy her daughter an adult riding habit, and constantly belittles her appearance, calling her “ugly” (312) -- all things designed to stifle the young girl’s sexuality and stall her development. And although Caroline is innocent of the real reason for Louisa’s actions, she is aware that the main cause for all her mother’s behavior is sexual jealousy: “She’s like as if she was angry with me for growing tall--& when I want to be dressed more like a woman & to have scarfs & calling me vain & conceited -- a hussey-- I can’t help sometimes letting her hear a bit of the real truth...she’s jealous of me -- because people will think she
is old if she has such a woman as I am for a daughter” (308). Brontë seems to confirm Caroline’s view of her mother as an older woman, aware now that she has no sexual power over Northangerland or Zamorna (and therefore of no worth in this male world), and trapped as a prisoner in Zamorna’s house, watching him prepare her young daughter for the sexual prominence she once enjoyed. There is very little concern shown by this mother for her daughter, only nostalgia for her old role as a sexual syren and resentment at her daughter’s future success. Brontë makes clear that Louisa cannot win this sexual battle with her daughter because she no longer has any value: her worth in Angria was as a charming mistress, but now older and grayer, she is no match for her fresh fifteen-year-old daughter. Her hysterical fits of rage are ignored by both Northangerland and Zamorna; she is labeled a “liar” (306), and finally silenced by Caroline, who carries her mother up the stairs and locks her up in her bedroom. And this is the last time that Louisa appears in the novelettes.

Caroline’s efforts to please the men and ignore her mother are rewarded; she is taken out of this unhealthy environment and sent to Paris to further her education, while her mother is left to rot at Hawkscliffe. (Caroline agrees that her mother should not go abroad because of her embarrassing conduct; and Zamorna says she is “not fit to be let loose on society”) (314). But once Caroline returns from Paris, Northangerland’s distrust of Zamorna keeps Caroline
away from her guardian at all times, locked up in his house in Scotland during the great season in Angria. The reason for isolating Caroline is economic: Caroline can only make a great social marriage if she maintains her purity, and her father desires to maintain that at all cost.

This plot twist sets up the seduction attempt, in which all the subtle sexual play comes to fruition. Caroline who now defines her once childish affection for Zamorna as "love" (337), sneaks out of her exile to surprise him at Fidena. Brontë makes it clear that Caroline’s views of Zamorna are ill-formed and naive: she never comes to a clear understanding of what she wants from Zamorna, and she has never clearly understood his character. She has divided her perception of him as two selves: the self of loving guardian, father/figure, and the self of passionate lover. That kind of division works as a theme throughout all of Victorian literature (for example in Dickens’ father/daughter marriages), but it also works as a theme in incest stories: the two selves of the parent, switching back and forth between kind parent and rough molester, the daddy at day versus the daddy at night. When fifteen-year-old Caroline is finally seduced, she is alone with Zamorna in a room far to the back of the house where her screams could not be heard. And Zamorna turns quickly from her kind guardian to an overpowering presence she cannot control:
Here he was --the man that Montmorency had described to her--all at once she knew him--Her Guardian was gone--Something terrible sat in his place--The fire in the grate was sunk down without a blaze--this silent lonely library, so far away from the inhabited part of the house--was gathering a deeper shade in all its Gothic recesses. She grew faint by the powerful arm--flung over the back of her chair--At last--through the long & profound silence, a low whisper stole from her lips. "May I go away?" No answer--She attempted to rise--this movement produced the effect she had feared, the arm closed round her--Miss Vernon could not resist its strength, a piteous upward look was her only appeal -- He, Satan's eldest Son, smiled at the mute prayer-- "She trembles with terror" said he, speaking to himself. "Her face has turned pale as marble within the last minute or two--how did. I alarm her? Caroline, do you know me?" (353)

In one sense, this is the typical Byronic hero at his dirty work again. But connected to the child/adult meeting described earlier, this encounter also works on the level of sexual abuse, with the meeting separate from the rest of the house (nowhere to scream for help) and the father/figure manipulating the rogue/nurturing selves to alternate between abuser ("the arm closed round her") and the comforter ("Caroline, do you know me?"). The woman/child, succumbing to her own passion and trust in Zamorna's tenderness towards her (his father personality), agrees to leave with him to his retreat, and thus seals her doom as his mistress. Her sexual worth goes down to nothing (except for Zamorna's needs), and she is kept, like her mother, as a woman/prisoner in Zamorna's house, rejected by the rest of society, and completely dependent on him for her economic survival. This seems to be the common fate for all Angrian women who maintain sexual relationships as mistresses and wives.
With all this abuse and oppression overwhelming these female characters, is there any rage? Gilbert and Gubar found all kinds of imagery of rage in the novels *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, but how would rage appear (if it does) in the juvenilia, where Charlotte, a still unsophisticated writer, is creating a fantasy world which (she believes) is closed to the outside world? The rage that I find in the juvenilia was quite interesting, because in a crude way, it echoes the literary techniques Charlotte Brontë would use fifteen years later in her novels.

All of these Angrian women are hungry for unconditional love, and many are furious because no one can fulfill their demands; they seem to hold inside them “bottomless pits of need” (Bass 370); they cry out for constant nurturance and acceptance. But the two Byronic heroes, Northangerland and Zamorna, who serve both as father figures and lovers, are abusive with that love, neglectful and cold towards the women who are dependent on them. (They imitate, in fact, the emotional distance of the Duke of Wellington, which reflects in turn upon the aloofness of Brontë’s own father.) The Byronic heroes arrive and depart from their lovers at whim, following the desires of their own selfish fancies, using the women as sexual toys and entertaining companions. When the women are compliant, the men stay until they get bored; when the women are irritable or angry, they leave quickly. This discrepancy between what the women want from a lover and what
they get creates a host of reactions, from Mina Laury’s complete compliance (to get at least some attention) to Mary Percy’s acceptance of a system in which she shares her husband with his lovers. And the discrepancy can also create overwhelming rage in a woman, stemming from the rejection of love and the desire to attack the man who refuses to love her.

The first appearance of rage in the novelettes is seen in Louisa Dance, in the story Passing Events. The story has previously centered on Mina Laury, Zamorna’s masochistic mistress, who has devoted her whole life to serving all her “Master’s” (44) needs, but has accepted that his love for her is transitory at best: “…I know that he even seldom troubles himself to think of what I do, & has never & can never appreciate the unusual feelings of subservience, the total self-sacrifice I offer at his shrine, but then he gives me my reward & that an abundant one” (44). At the end of her scene with Zamorna, Mina tearfully has accepted a separation from him, without a touch of anger. Her last words to him are “Obedient till Death” (48). As soon as Zamorna leaves Mina, he runs into Louisa Dance, who seems to behave in the same subservient way. But reaching down to kiss his hand, she bites it instead, drawing blood: “he pushed her slightly from him, she still retained his hand however & bending her head over it seemed to press her lips to it. She let it drop, he had neither started nor spoken, but the blood was trickling rapidly from it & there was a deep incision made by
he teeth of the she-tigress” (49). The doubling that occurs here between angel and vampire, innocent and monster, is a rather crude version of the much more subtle work Brontë will do later with Jane Eyre and Bertha Rochester. But the character of Louisa Dance is moving towards a more complex description of rage: a woman who has learned to hide her fury under the guise of innocence, to survive through manipulation of men.

“The images of ‘angel’ and ‘monster’ have been so ubiquitous throughout literature by men that they have also pervaded women’s writing to such an extent that few women have totally ‘killed’ either figure” (Gilbert & Gubar 17). What Gilbert & Gubar say here is certainly true for Brontë’s juvenilia—-in fact, Charlotte’s first depiction of women characters begins (in 1830) as a litany of angels and monsters: The Duchess of Wellington (“an earthly angel” (Alexander, Edition 287) the Marquis of Douro’s first love, Marian (a beautiful, pure innocent who plays a golden harp) and Zenobia Ellrington: a combination of all female monsters rolled into one: sexual fury, demanding rebel, wicked witch. With the arrival of Zenobia Ellrington, fifteen-year-old Charlotte throws an explosive into her otherwise peaceful, well-controlled world, and then sits back to watch the sparks fly. Zenobia’s character is painted in broad strokes, a fairy tale character. In a world where being large equals power, she is tall and physically powerful; big enough to take up space and be noticed, and strong enough to push one
of the Duke's insulting sons down a flight of stairs with a "yell of ungovernable rage" (Alexander, Edition 303). The other women have pale ghostly skin like marble angels; Zenobia looks like the wild black Ashantees; with a "dark, glowing complexion" (Alexander, Edition 293) and a "swarthy face" (Alexander, Edition 313). And Zenobia's actions shake up Glasstown: highly intelligent and educated (fluent in three languages, a classics scholar), Zenobia is furious at her entrapment in this world, at her choices as a woman. The other women seem "silly" to her, their "angelic" behavior disgusting. The Duchess, for example, she calls just a "handmaid for the imperious lord who domineers over her" (Alexander, Edition 302).

The "imperious lords" of Glasstown, the Duke and his military officers/cronies, look at Zenobia with a mixture of irritation and humor. They laugh at her intelligence ("her eyes...are not so darkly or beautifully blue as her stockings" (Alexander, Edition 300); they thank God that their wives don't engage in such nonsense: "I know I should not like it if when I went home tired and hungry I found my table heaped high with books and papers instead of a good, hot, smoking dinner" (Alexander, Edition 314). This kind of banter reaches its height at an all-male drinking session when the Duke of Wellington, Charlotte's hero, condemns Zenobia and puts her in her place:
You have likened this lady, Zenobia Ellrington, to a swan. Now, with your leave, I’ll pursue the parallel; nay, enlarge it, for I’ll liken all womankind to the same bird. We all know that the proper and native element of swans is water, where no creature can equal them in dignity, gracefulness and majestic beauty. There, in short, they are unrivalled. But whenever they presume to set foot on land their unseemly waddle entitles every winged creature, eagle and wren alike, to laugh till their sides split at the ludicrous spectacle. In like manner the proper and native element of woman is the home. That is her kingdom, her undisputed and rightful possession. But when she foolishly wanders thence and forces herself upon the public eye the swan’s vagaries are but a type of those she exhibits (Alexander, Edition 313-4).

But it is not Zenobia’s political stance that makes her frightening: the male echelon, as we see here, feels very much in control of that. It is her sexuality and rage that terrify them, what Gilbert and Gubar define in Bertha Rochester as “a passionate, barely disguised rebelliousness” (337). Zenobia wears her sexuality openly; she is costumed in “a robe of crimson velvet trimmed with ermine,” with black ostrich feathers in her dark hair, and “flashing black eyes” (Alexander, Edition 293). And unlike her nemesis Marian Hume, who waits patiently for her lover’s attention, Zenobia becomes the sexual aggressor, following the Marquis deep into the forest until she can confront him with her own demands. In the scene where she meets the Marquis, Zenobia has turned half-mad, her unrequited passion for the Marquis driving her into a murderous rage. It is here, in this scene, that we can see the future creation of Bertha Rochester:
...the form of Lady Ellrington started up before him. Her head was bare, her tall person was enveloped in the tattered remnants of a dark velvet mantle. Her dishevelled hair hung in wild elf-locks over her face, neck and shoulders, almost concealing her features, which were emaciated and pale as death. He stepped back a few paces, startled at the sudden and ghastly apparition. She threw herself on her knees before him, exclaiming in wild, maniacal accents: 'My lord, tell me truly, sincerely, ingenuously, where you have been. I heard that you had left Verdopolis, and I followed you on foot five hundred miles. Then my strength failed me, and I lay down in this place, as I thought, to die. But it was doomed I should see you once more before I became an inhabitant of the grave. Answer me, my lord: have you seen that wretch Marian Hume? Have you spoken to her? Viper! Viper! Oh that I could sheathe this weapon in her heart!' Here she stopped for want of breath and, drawing a long, sharp, glittering knife from under her cloak, brandished it wildly in the air... (Alexander, Edition 343).

Underneath all the melodramatic language is a very dangerous woman, someone with almost no self-control. And once Zenobia has defined her rival, the fairy-tale princess Marian, she becomes a real wicked witch, calling up an evil demon in the forest to deceive the Marquis. The magic fails, and Zenobia loses her last change to capture the Marquis:

"She implored him on her knees to forgive an attempt which love alone had dictated, but he turned from her with a smile of bitter contempt and disdain, and hastened to his father's palace" (Alexander, Edition 347). The Marquis rejects Zenobia and marries his dove-like angel (Alexander, Edition 306), Marian Hume. And this wicked witch, like most fairy tale witches, is flung out into oblivion.

What makes Zenobia so dangerous? It is not passion; certainly all the woman, including Mina Laury, share the same ability to love dangerously. It is, instead, the way that
passion can turn into rage and violence, the way that Zenobia imitates male power ("brandishing a long, sharp glittering knife" (Alexander, Edition 343). Even when Brontë at twenty has turned Glasstown into the more sophisticated Angria and has banished much of the magic and archetypes, Zenobia still holds much of that female power, and her male lovers still fear it. Her husband, the womanizing Northangerland, chooses frivolous, "silly" (Alexander, Edition 302) women over his wife, and avoids her sexual advances: to submit to Zenobia would mean "tying (himself) to her apron strings" (42); she holds too much power: the power of the Mother, and, implies her husband, the power of the Medusa: "The Furies, I believe, had hair of live snakes" (281). To protect himself, Northangerland spends most of his time with his mistresses, leaving her alone and chaste in his mansion.

And in that way Zenobia is imprisoned and punished. She is not mistreated physically, not chained like Bertha Rochester; but she is beaten down verbally by her husband, who in his words represents the male systems of values that condemns her for her rage and unangelic appearance and conduct: she is not delicate or sweet, she is too hefty to be attractive; prostitutes are a more inviting sexual prospect than she is; she is perhaps, not really a member of the nobility at all, but an illegitimate child by a mother who was secretly a whore (41). In one of the many scenes where her sexuality is turned against her, Zenobia keeps her silence but lashes out in violence after her husband has
left: "the Countess said nothing, she could not speak, but a
destructive crack & the splendid fragments of a shivered
mirror told what she felt" (42).

Like the wild Ashantees, she has kept her silence, and
like a good little girl, she has learned to turn her hatred
onto herself, shattering her own self image. The Zenobia of
Angria turns into a parody of her fairy-tale self, her huge
size becomes extra girth; she is a "stout and portly" (128)
matron, who Brontë says, has no trouble filling up a chair
with her behind (128). And the wild woman who used to roam
through the woods now locks herself in her husband's house,
staring vacantly out the windows: "...a woman who in her
thirtieth year has waxed so imperially stout & high that she
will not even leave her own saloons for the benefit of fresh
air" (50). It is interesting that in the passage from
teenager to young woman, Charlotte Brontë transforms the
Glasstown's Marquis of Douro into the raging, Byronic
Zamorna, and the wild Zenobia into a depressed matron-- a
woman who stalks her sitting room the way that Bertha the
madwoman will someday stalk her attic prison.

As Brontë becomes a more sophisticated thinker and
writer, the "puppet" (15) (two-dimensional) characters of
Angria change into the much more fully developed characters
in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*. But the ways of dealing with the
male world don't seem to change as much; Brontë still will
create women who manipulate to survive (Ginevra Fanshawe,
Blanche Ingram); women who are overcome with rage (Bertha
Rochester); and those who survive the best, who maintain enough self-control to stay emotionally and financially independent from men, thus preserving their own sanity (Elizabeth Hastings in the juvenilia, and of course, Jane Eyre).
CHAPTER III

THE BATTERED CHILD: JANE EYRE AS A SURVIVOR OF PHYSICAL ABUSE, EMOTIONAL ABUSE, AND NEGLECT

On one level, Jane Eyre works as a "feminist fairy tale" or as what Moglen calls a "feminist myth" (105): a woman who battles all degradation nobly, who is rewarded with true love, and whose enemies are justly punished for their sins against her.1 From the Reed family, for example, John Reed dies a whoremonger and gambler, Mrs. Reed dies from the shock, Georgiana becomes a dissolute debutante, and Eliza rots away her life in a convent. But despite all the plot contrivances that do away with Jane's enemies and allow her to gain ultimate happiness, the essence of Jane's struggle is psychologically astute: Jane Eyre is a very accurate portrayal of emotional and physical abuse and neglect, and their combined effects on a child. And as we will see, Jane succeeds as a survivor because she fights the abuse, which allows her to develop a strong sense of self-worth and to lessen the crippling effects of childhood abuse, the self-hatred and mental paralysis that overwhelm Lucy Snowe.

1Since this study focuses on Jane Eyre as a survivor of child abuse, most of my analysis in this chapter will center on the Gateshead and Lowood sections of Jane Eyre.

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As the Gateshead section opens, the reader is immediately aware of how physically vulnerable (and helpless) a child like Jane is in this abusive environment. As a child, she has no way of leaving the house on her own; her first line, “There was no possibility of taking a walk that day” (1), develops into a description of how hostile the world is outside Gateshead: a frozen wasteland with “leafless shrubbery” (1). To run away into this unknown would be to risk death by starvation and neglect instead of the slow psychic death the family inflicts on her. The same childish body that prevents her from surviving outside Gateshead also endangers her inside it: she describes herself as “physically inferior” (1) to everyone else in the family, smaller and weaker than her bullying cousin John. She is subject to the verbal abuse of Mrs. Reed and her cousins, and the physical battering of John Reed: “He bullied and punished me; not two or three times in the week, nor once or twice in a day, but continually” (4). In contemporary terms Jane fits both the definition of the “battered child” (the “wasted and neglected child” who may suffer “deliberate cruelty”) (Smith 27) and the “consciously rejected child” (one of those “children whose parents had excluded them from the family and had taken active steps to have them placed elsewhere” (Pemberton and Benady 454).

Jane fends off the attacks by remaining as silent and passive as possible, like Lucy Snowe, making herself
invisible (hiding in window seats), and cooling the irritation of John and Mrs. Reed with her constant attempts at compliance. Meanwhile, in the pictures of Bewick’s *History of British Birds*, Brontë shows the reader how Jane is affected by the constant abuse:

> Of these death-white realms I formed an idea of my own: shadowy, like all the half-comprehended notions that float dim through children’s brains, but strangely impressive. The words in these introductory pages connected themselves with the succeeding vignettes, and gave significance to the rock standing up alone in a sea of billow and spray; to the broken boat stranded on a desolate coast; to the cold and ghastly moon glancing through bars of cloud at a wreck just sinking....

The fiend pinning down the thief’s pack behind him, I passed over quickly: it was an object of terror....

So was the black, horned thing seated aloof on a rock, surveying a distant crowd surrounding a gallows (2-3).

What comes out of that passage is not only isolation ("the rock standing up alone in a sea of billow and spray" (2)) but the terror of being alone and vulnerable in a dangerous, perhaps deadly environment (Jane earlier describes the scene as one “where the Northern Ocean, in vast whirls boils - round the naked, melancholy isles of farthest Thules” (2)). The frozen landscape (“the land of ice and snow” (2)) symbolizes the impossibility of escape and the lack of warmth and love in Jane’s “family.”

Jane’s subconscious desire to describe her environment as deadly (“these death-white realms” (2)) is quite reasonable, considering that her most dangerous abuser, John Reed, gains pleasure from killing and has no deep interest
in keeping her alive. According to D. Bakan in his study *Slaughter of the Innocents: A Study of the Battered Child Phenomenon*, the “aim of those who abuse a child is to kill the child: the reason for abusing him or her is to get rid of him or her” (Smith 11). And as in many abusive families where one “murderously aggressive” sibling (Tooley 460) attacks another, Mrs. Reed as the “parent” refuses to intercede for Jane, protecting her abusive son instead and calling the victimized Jane “not worthy of notice” (20).

“Mrs. Reed,” Jane says, “was blind and deaf on the subject: she never saw him strike or heard him abuse me, though he did both now and then in her very presence...” (4). This is a common pattern in an abusive home, usually brought about because the mother has made it clear that she too would like to see the unwanted child disappear: as one clinical report states, “older siblings were acting out the mother’s (only slightly) unconscious wish to be rid of the younger children - a rather drastic form of maternal rejection that must have been manifest in many other ways in addition to the murderous acting out of the older sibling” (Tooley 460).

The image of frozen wasteland (representing death) runs throughout *Jane Eyre*, appearing in the landscape outside of Lowood, and in the paintings she creates before arriving at Thornfield. The image begins to disappear from Jane’s perception in direct response to the development of her relationship with Rochester; by the time she returns from her trip to Gateshead (just before his proposal), the grounds
round Thornfield have grown thick with summer hay, and her sketches reflect hope instead of desolation: "...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" (220). The wasteland image reoccurs when Jane is forced to leave Thornfield, and is faced with the prospect of emotional death (leaving Rochester’s love) and physical death (dying from starvation and neglect). Her fearful words reflect the same landscapes that she described while looking at Bewick’s *Birds*: “A Christmas frost had come at midsummer; a white December storm had whirled over June; ice glazed the ripe apples...the woods, which twelve hours since waved leafy and fragrant as groves between the tropics, now spread, waste, wild and white as pine-forests in wintry Norway” (281). Destitute after running away from Rochester, Jane faces her worst nightmare: she is abandoned in a physical wasteland (the moors) where she faces death from starvation and exposure. Physically, Jane is as vulnerable as she was as a child in the red room: her body begins to weaken after two days of desperate wandering. But Jane has developed a spirit that helps her fight for her life, a self-love nurtured by Rochester’s devotion, and ironically, by her final decision to leave him. With a strong enough desire to live, she is able to persist until she can be rescued.

In the original pictures of Bewick’s *Birds* which Jane makes her own, the overall feeling in her descriptions is one of desolation and despair. Besides isolation and an absence
of love, the pictures also portray the guilt and shame that lurk behind Jane's silence. At Gateshead she is the unwanted child who cannot do anything right, always called spiteful and unnatural by her elders. Her passions, so natural to her, make her in this house an abnormal, "nasty" (20) child. In the dynamics of her abusive home, Jane acts as the "scapegoat," the weak outsider that others can project their own inadequacies upon (Green 483). John Reed for example, can project his own destructive behavior onto Jane; she, not he, behaves like a "bad animal" (3) and a "rat" (5). Like L'Enfant and other battered children in the juvenilia, Jane, unaware that she is a convenient scapegoat, is bewildered by the brutal attacks which have no apparent cause: "Why could I never please?" she asks in the red room, "Why was it useless to win any one's favour?" (8). The constant chastising with no clear cause makes Jane feel guilty; she suspects that she isn't normal, but defective in some way; not a whole child but a "broken boat" left stranded, a "thief," a criminal who deserves to be hanged on the gallows (2).

In Bewick's scenes, powerful creatures look on uninterested, while a victim lies abandoned: "the cold and ghastly moon" glancing at a wreck, the "black, horned thing" passively watching a victim's execution (2). Parallel to this, all of Jane's elders at Gateshead are either victimizers or aloof spectators; protective and nurturing adults are nonexistent. The "mercurial" (Craik 77) Bessie
loves Jane one minute and threatens to strap her to a chair in the red-room the next; John Reed is consistently savage and violent; Eliza and Georgiana observe her trials passively; Miss Abbot tells her she will rot in Hell: and Mrs. Reed barely tolerates her presence. The images in Bewick’s *Birds* suggest to Jane her own identity – a victim, at worst forced to suffer the attacks of her elders, and at best shunned and ignored: “the rock standing alone in a sea of billow and spray.” The result of emotional and physical abuse at Gateshead leaves Jane with many characteristics of battered children: a “sorrowful” nature, “failure to thrive,” “withdrawal,” “impaired capacity for enjoyment,” and a deep depression which after her imprisonment in the red room, drives Jane towards suicide (Martin and Beezley 436).

The abuse also causes tremendous confusion in Jane, because her own perception of herself as victim is constantly being redefined by the adults; her gut instinct conflicts with the constant messages from the adult “liars,” (29) Mrs. Reed, John Reed, Miss Abbot, who, while creating (or allowing) the abuse, blame Jane for inciting it: John Reed for example, says Jane deserves to be punished because she gave him a nasty look; Miss Abbot suggests that Jane defies John Reed not out of self-defense, but because she is by nature evil and rebellious, exhibiting the evil that “was always in her” (6).

The practice of “blaming the victim” (Bass, 104) is a classic strategy in child abuse, which functions to protect
he abuser by blaming the child: a father who sexually abuses his daughter, for example, often tells her that she excited him first; a child (like Jane in the red room) who screams and yells in resistance is labeled crazy or manipulative, and is therefore easily ignored. This strategy allows the adult abuser to appear innocent and even victimized by an ungrateful child (as Mrs. Reed is perceived to be by Mr. Brocklehurst), while the child, her own reality redefined by the adults, slips gradually into despair, more and more suspicious of her own sanity.

This strategy also succeeds because it blackmails the child, encouraging the child to give up her ability to speak the truth in exchange for the love and affection she could receive with her silence. Though none of her abusers offers Jane love (Mrs. Reed for example, refuses to like Jane no matter what she does), they make it clear that her depression in response to the abuse makes her unattractive and more unlikable. Mrs. Reed, the first “parent” Jane desperately tries to please, is the main instigator of this kind of blackmail. Her strategy is laid out in the following passage, which sets down the rules for how Jane could become accepted at Gateshead:

She regretted to be under the necessity of keeping me at a distance; but that until she heard from Bessie, and could discover by her own observation that I was endeavoring in good earnest to acquire a more sociable and childlike disposition, a more attractive and sprightly manner—something lighter, franker, more natural, as it were—she really must exclude me from privileges intended only for contented, happy little children. (1)
There is an internal conflict in these words: to be "attractive and sprightly" Jane would have to smile and be charming in spite of the depression she feels. She could do so ("endeavoring in good earnest"), if she tried harder, and if, like Brontë's earlier masochistic heroine, Mina Laury, she were desperate enough for affection to ignore the abuse. Implied in the term "childlike disposition" is the assumption that a real child, a real innocent (like Dickens' Esther Summerson or Little Dorrit) would be too pure to deserve the abuse, or at least too sweet to be affected by it. Jane later seems to agree that she is abused partly because of a fault in her nature: if she had been a more "sanguine, brilliant" (9) child, she says, she would have been able to please Mrs. Reed and John, implying that her inability to meet their (irrational) standards was due to a lack in her own nature. Ironically, this masochistic search for a defect inside the self often gives the abused child her first sense of control over a chaotic environment, and helps her believe that her irrational abusers are behaving reasonably.

To follow Mrs. Reed's advice however is to engage in self destruction. In order to become a "contented, happy" little child, Jane must behave in a more "natural" manner. But for Jane, to be "contented and happy" is unnatural. In fact, Mrs. Reed doesn't want Jane to be "natural" (i.e. honest), since that is what she has now, a "Madam Mope" (3), desperate and full of rage. What she wants instead is for Jane to transform herself into a "happy" child, who can blend
quietly into the facade of her peaceful home and ease her own guilt.

To reform Jane, or at least to keep her silent, Mrs. Reed censors the child’s speech. When Jane tries to find out what she has done wrong, Mrs. Reed answers her quickly: “Jane, I don’t like cavillers or questioners; besides, there is something truly forbidding in a child taking up her elders in that manner. Be seated somewhere; and until you can speak pleasantly, remain silent” (1). Jane is told here to keep both her confusion and rage silent: there is no rationale behind the abuser’s power; it exists any way it pleases, and it exists to control Jane. Her answers, if she speaks, should be “pleasant” (the artificial voice of the charming child). But Jane cannot accept that silence, since speech is what allows her to find the truth. Once silent, Jane would have no direct way of separating John or Mrs. Reed’s words from herself, and eventually she would begin to believe (as Helen Burns did) that the insults were true. Thus, Mrs. Reed’s imposed silence would work like a slow poison, breaking apart Jane’s self esteem, which is already fragile in a loveless environment.

Jane of course rejects Mrs. Reed’s censorship (while internalizing some of the confusion and self-hatred, as seen in her visions of broken boats), and openly defies both her mother-substitute and her cousin John, thus creating a furor in the community of adults designed to keep her sweet and silent. Her most important confrontation is with her cousin
John, who embodies all the aspects of male power that Jane must learn to fight during the rest of her journey. It is a crucial battle for Jane because she learns that open outbursts of rage, though dangerously punished by society, are a healthy way of maintaining her integrity and self-worth. It is in this one episode that Jane learns what most abused children never accept until adulthood.

"Master Reed" (3) is a caricature of male excess, oozing lust for sex and power. He embodies the elements of manhood that terrify (and fascinate) Brontë: uncontrolled lust, combined with the sadistic desire to dominate. The first description of John depicts him as a grotesque creature of excess: "large and stout for his age, with a dingy and unwholesome skin; thick lineaments in a spacious visage, heavy limbs and large extremities. He gorged himself habitually at table, which made him bilious, and gave him a dim and bleared eye with flabby cheeks" (3). This image of uncontrolled appetite reflects back to the last description of Zamorna in Caroline Vernon, where Zamorna, now a boorish middle-aged glutton, stuffs food down his mouth without bothering to chew it first.

But like Zamorna, John Reed is still dangerous despite his weakening excess, because he is aware of his own male power. Jane is initially trapped in front of "Master" John's chair while he proceeds to taunt her: "Habitually obedient to John, I came up to his chair; he spent some three minutes in thrusting out his tongue at me as far as he could without
damaging the roots..." (4). The sexual quality of this taunt adds to the way John verbally dehumanizes Jane: she has no worth he says, because she has no money, no family, no position in what will soon be his house (4). In a system where he is "Roman Emperor" (5), in a society where men rule and women serve, the man in power defines her worth, and her worth in this household is as his inherited punching bag. John emphasizes this reality by ordering Jane away from the furniture before he hits her ("Go and stand by the door, out of the way of the mirror and the windows"), implying that she has less worth than the furniture he might accidentally damage.

When Jane fights back, she is attacking that definition of herself as a "thing" (9) for his use. To fight John Reed is an empowering act, with which she salvages her integrity, her desire to live, and her self respect. Modern therapy suggests that a woman's anger against her abuser is a "healthy" sign of her healing. According to Ellen Bass, a well-known therapist for abused women, anger is "both a healthy response to violation and a transformative, powerful energy" (123). Jane Eyre's description of her own outburst, however, reveals Jane's (and perhaps Charlotte Brontë's) conflict over the benefits of female rage, and introduces the debate in _Jane Eyre_ on how female anger relates to (or perhaps equals) female madness.

"The fact is," Jane says, "I was a trifle beside myself; or rather out of myself, as the French would say" (5). The
sarcastic tone of the words does not hide the fact that Jane, now as the adult narrator, sees that behavior as a sort of insanity, separate from her real "calm," mature self. As an adult, clashing with Rochester or St. John, she will again distance herself from the "passion" (240) she feels during these conflicts.

This female rage in Jane Eyre is directed at the parent-substitutes who neglect or betray Jane along her journey: Mrs. Reed, Brocklehurst, and Rochester (Jane's father/lover). In the early juvenilia, Brontë's stories glow with father-worship, as her child/heroes, the Marquis of Douro and his brother Charles, are constantly saved from brutal torture by their godlike father, the Duke of Wellington. But there is no godlike father in Jane Eyre: Jane must rescue herself. Brontë makes it clear that Jane has no blind faith in fathers: the ones she has as a child are too weak to be of much help (the ghostly Mr. Reed and Mr. Lloyd), and those she depends on for support (Brocklehurst and later, Rochester) manipulate her for their own self-interest.

Jane maintains her distance from these "bad" parents with a combination of suspicion and rage. Her outbursts (directed at Mrs. Reed and Rochester) empower her because she can tell the "truth" (30), cutting through the manipulative language that would otherwise bewilder her. Jane's famous speech to Rochester, for example ("Do you think, because I am poor, obscure, plain, and little, I am soulless and heartless?" (240)), is a response to her "master's" teasing
references to Blanche Ingram. The brutal honesty of her speech shocks Rochester into a sincere confession and a marriage proposal.

Jane however is limited to “rational” rebellion, since (as the red room reveals) the line between rage and madness is paper thin. The rest of the rage against oppressors/fathers/lovers is dispersed through Brontë’s plot contrivances (which do away with Brocklehurst and Mrs. Reed) and the murderous rage of her “madwoman,” Bertha Mason. Bertha’s goals are twofold: to stop Jane’s marriage to Rochester (ripping the veil in half before the wedding), and to avenge herself by killing Rochester (by burning his bed, and ultimately, destroying Thornfield) (Gilbert and Gubar 359-60). Bertha’s role as Jane’s “double” who carries out Jane’s secret desires, has been well established by Rigney, Moglen, and Gilbert and Gubar. Rigney and Moglen both see Bertha as representative of Jane’s dangerous anger and “passion”: for Rigney, the madwoman is a “warning” of what could occur if Jane’s “self-love and self-preservation become secondary to love for another” (28); for Moglen, Bertha represents “Jane’s resistance to male authority,” and “her fear of that sexual surrender which will seal her complete dependence in passion”(126). Gilbert and Gubar describe Bertha as “the angry aspect of the orphan child,” the “criminal self,” that acts upon Jane’s “disguised hostility to Rochester.” “What Bertha now does ...is what Jane wants to do” (359).
But the madwoman’s rage, however powerful, is still subdued in *Jane Eyre*: Bertha’s rage is not enough to kill Rochester, and Bertha (though Jane’s double) is rejected by Jane. As Elaine Showalter notes, “...Jane never sees her kinship with the confined and monstrous double, and ... Brontë has no sympathy for her mad creature” (68-69). The disgust at Bertha displayed by both Rochester and Jane suggests a conflict in Brontë’s own opinion of female rage. The “doppelganger” (Rigney, 27) approach implies that Brontë validates Bertha’s rage; yet Brontë’s madwomen (Zenobia, Bertha Mason, Vashti) are destroyed by their anger; once they yield fully to it, it rushes them helplessly into madness. To be engulfed by rage, Brontë implies, is as dangerous as being obsessed by love. And as Brontë shows in the red room, a show of “too much” rage can be enough for society to define a woman as insane.

Even as a child, it is important for Jane to separate herself from her rage because of the implicit dangers in owning that emotion: as Bessie and Miss Abbot suggest in the red room, an angry woman, a woman who lashes out in fury like a “rebel slave” (6), must be mad. The servants’ response to her “madness” in the red room is a reflection of how Brontë’s society defined and regulated female madness (and female rage as a symptom of madness). Female insanity in mid-nineteenth century Britain was defined, according to Elaine Showalter in
her study The Female Malady, as "deviance from socially acceptable behavior" (29). The cure was to reform the madwoman by "domesticating" (23) her insanity, training her to alter her behavior through the practice of "industry, self-control, moderation, and perserverence" (29). "Curing" the insanity was impossible, since the cause was the woman herself: her own sexual cycles (first menses, pregnancy, menopause) brought a woman (if she wasn't exercising self-control) to the brink of insanity (53).

The servants' actions in Jane Eyre exhibit both a belief in this system and a willingness to use the old methods of physical restraint. At first the servants are willing to tie the screaming "mad cat" (6) Jane to a chair in her new "jail" (8), but aware of the consequences, Jane quiets down immediately (unlike Bertha), and is rewarded for her "rational" behavior with more modern treatment: "domestication" (23) through reason and moral management.

There is no question in Miss Abbot's mind that the insanity is permanently part of Jane's nature: "it was always in her" (6), she tells Bessie and Mrs. Reed. But the two servants immediately try to reason with Jane, suggesting that Jane can escape this madness by willingly accepting her place in the social system at Gateshead (which is, after all, run by the same rules that govern the rest of Jane's society). Miss Abbot repeats Mrs. Reed's suggestion that Jane transform herself into a "happy, contented child" and
John’s judgment that she is worthless without wealth: “They [the Reed children] will have a great deal of money and you will have none; it is your place to be humble, and to try to make yourself agreeable to them” (7). Miss Abbot also puts Jane in her spiritual place; not only is she upsetting the social order, but she is also threatening the rules of God’s kingdom by moving away from the submission God ordered in women: “Besides,...God will punish her: He might strike her dead in the midst of her tantrums, and then where would she go?” (7).

This image of the heroine threatened by insanity “protected” in an asylum occurs several times in Brontë’s novels: in the red room (self-confinement with "nurturing" attendants); at Lowood (where a system of moral management produces “quiet and plain” inmates), and, at Madame Beck’s pension in Villette (an institution designed as a “model of surveillance”). By placing her heroines in these asylums/refuges, Brontë expresses her own ambivalence about female rage and insanity: her characters balance precariously between the dangers of repressing rage (becoming sick like Lucy Snowe) versus the danger of expressing too much (like Bertha). The threat of insanity guarantees that Jane will maintain her Lowood reserve and curtail her rage, except in situations (as in her conflicts with Rochester and St. John) where her anger will not be defined as madness.
Solitary confinement in the red room gives Jane time to realize the severity of her situation. Jane learns in the red room that the situation she is in is "unjust" (9), but that her only way to escape her abusive home is either through insanity or death. She comes close to insanity in the red room, but her decision once she recovers, before her rescue by Mr. Lloyd, is to choose death. Awakening from the night in the red room, Jane realizes that her home environment will not change, that her rebellion has in fact, worsened it. Aware of her powerlessness, she begins to stop eating, and stop her greatest pleasure (reading), her body and spirit giving in to overwhelming depression. Jane feels an "unutterable wretchedness of mind" (13), her body weakening along with her spirit: "in fact, my racked nerves were in such a state that no calm could sooth, and no pleasure excite them agreeably" (14). Her illness (both physical and mental) is noticed by Bessie (who suspects on that first night after the red room that Jane "might die" [13]) and by the apothecary, Mr. Lloyd: "The child ought to have a change of air and scene...nerves not in a good state" (18). Mr. Lloyd and the dead Mr. Reed provide for Jane the only nurturing father figures she has at Gateshead: Mr. Reed (in his apparent love for Jane before her death) gives her some hope in her self-worth, and Mr. Lloyd through his intervention provides her with an escape. In fact, without the intervention of Mr. Lloyd, whom she trusts as an outsider to the Reed family, Jane would slip into death perhaps as
easily as Helen does at Lowood. Both "fathers" provide the only emotional support Jane receives at Gateshead, but neither can protect Jane from her tormentors: she must learn how to fight John and Mrs. Reed on her own. Once Jane has sensed however that Mr. Lloyd's intervention with Mrs. Reed has worked, she begins to recuperate, maintaining her fury (ironically now, more a help than a hindrance, since the more she can irritate Mrs. Reed, the less she will be welcome in the house). The anger she realizes now is what keeps her physically safe ("roused by the same sentiment of deep ire and desperate revolt," (20) she breaks John's nose and permanently frightens him), and emotionally safe (protecting her self esteem by turning the lies and abuse back onto the liar). Mrs. Reed has used the abuser's oldest tricks: doubletalk (confusing the child and keeping her powerless), ignoring the child's other abusers, and projecting her own faults (deceitful behavior, sneaky hypocrisy) onto the child. Finally, Mrs. Reed does what many adult/parent abusers do: after creating (or allowing) the abuse, she accuses Jane of lying, a strategy which protects her own reputation and ensures the child's silence. In a conversation with Mr. Brocklehurst, she says: "I should be glad if the superintendent and teachers were requested to keep a strict eye on her, and, above all, to guard against her worst fault, a tendency to deceit" (27).

Jane attacks in turn, separating the abuse from herself, and directing it back to the abuser:
I am not deceitful; if I were, I should say I loved you: but I declare I do not love you: I dislike you worst of anybody in the world except John Reed: and this book about the Liar, you may give to your girl, Georgiana, for it is she who tells lies, and not I (29).

This attack continues until Jane realizes that the real liar and hypocrite is Mrs. Reed herself: "People think you are a good woman, but you are bad, hard-hearted. You are deceitful!" (30) That knowledge preserves her self-respect and integrity, even as the attack itself makes her aware of her real weakness in the face of adult power. Mrs. Reed in turn, gives up all hope of changing Jane's character, and banishes her forever to Lowood, which will attempt to mold her into the invisible, meek creature that Mrs. Reed has failed to create.

Jane escapes, but only to another prison, where she faces physical neglect more than emotional abuse. Lowood is designed to produce submissive "poor girls" (28) who will work as self-sacrificing, humble drudges (governesses, teachers) at the beck and call of the upper classes. The "sadistic Evangelical Brocklehurst" (Eagleton 15), with all his spiritual pomposity, believes in the same creed as John Reed: girls without either money or status are worthless in themselves, worthwhile only for what they can provide to the wealthy and powerful. This message of worthlessness is transferred to the girls through the workings of the school: uniforms and hair cuts that hide the oldest girls' sexuality and "gave an air of oddity even to the prettiest" (40); food
that is "scarcely sufficient to keep alive a delicate invalid"; and the cheapest needles and thread to work with (54). The school is purely capitalistic, designed to gain the most product for the least amount of cost.

More insidious is the way the school functions in as secretive a way as the Reed's house: the school building itself is designed to hide its own sins. (Madame Beck's pension in Villette is designed in a similar fashion, with the "haunted" garden walled off and hidden from view). On her first arrival at Lowwood, Jane describes walking into a sort of locked box, in which the outer courtyard leads one into a more hidden building inside, blocked from an outsider's view: "I dimly discerned a wall before me and a door open in it; through this door I passed with my new guide: she shut and locked it behind her. There was now visible a house or houses--for the building spread far--with many windows, and lights burning in some; we went up a broad pebbly path, splashing wet, and were admitted at a door" (35-6). That sense of secrecy does not leave Lowood until Brockelhurst is revealed as an abuser; until that point, the school functions as a secret female prison: no male visitors (except for Mr. Brocklehurst) seem to appear at the school, and the girls themselves do not leave the school except for special visits to see Brocklehurst preach.

The school in fact, bears many similarities to the fantasy school at Vision Island which Charlotte creates at thirteen. In the original school, the beautiful pillared
hallways lead up to a "female" statue flowing water, behind which are the stairs leading to the dungeon where the "naughty children" (Alexander, 24) are tortured. Lowood too, has its marble "pillar" (24), Mr. Brocklehurst, who embodies both male sexual and physical power, and its ineffective "mother/statue" Miss Temple, whose inability to counter Mr. Brocklehurst’s destructive rulings is shown especially in the scene where Miss Temple, after acquiescing to Mr. Brocklehurst’s demands to continue starving the children, begins to turn into a marble statue before Jane’s eyes: "...her face, naturally pale as marble, appeared to be assuming also the coldness and fixity of that material; especially her mouth, closed as it would have required a sculptor’s chisel to open it, and her brow settled gradually into petrified severity" (56).

With the women/mothers unable (or unwilling) to protect the children, the children must fend for themselves, and as Brontë shows at Lowood, Jane’s ability to fight becomes her way of staying alive. For Brocklehurst, through his deliberate neglect, has made Lowood into a house of death. Throughout the juvenilia, children/women have been trapped in castle/prisons, unable because of the miserable, snowy weather to venture outside their husbands’ homes for fear of their own death, but in Lowood, death has already come inside, whistling as bitter wind through the slates of the attic, freezing their washing water, biting into their
clothes. The cold exacerbates the tuberculosis, which has already captured some of the children (Helen Burns included) and has weakened others in preparation for the typhoid epidemic which will come next. In order to survive physically the girls become wild animals, grabbing up whatever food is left and hogging the warmth of the fire. And as Moglen has said about Charlotte Brontë’s own guilt after surviving the devastation at Cowan Bridge School (“the guilt and shame which are always the companions of mourners who have been the voyeurs of disaster” (22)), the oncoming of death makes the healthy students at Lowood partners in the overall sense of guilt, guilt not only because the stronger children (like Jane) survive while others die, but guilt as well because their survival is based partly on the weakness of the others. During the worst part of the epidemic, for example, the minimal resource of food is spread much more generously when there are few left with an appetite: “there were fewer to feed” Jane says, “the sick could eat little; our breakfast basins were better filled” (69).

The other form of survival is emotional, and as in Gateshead, the trick to emotional survival at Lowood is to reject completely the definition of one’s worth by those in authority. But here Jane learns that survival does not necessarily mean voicing all one’s doubts. Brocklehurst cares mainly for what one looks like on the outside: the inside is one’s own. But the inside must remain angry and
discerning, and young Jane’s ability to respect her own passion, to tell the difference between “just” and “unjust” (50) punishment, is what allows her to maintain her self esteem during that first year at Lowood.

Helen Burns, on the other hand, is Jane’s example of what happens once the abuse becomes internalized. Helen, the recipient not just of physical neglect but of emotional abuse by Miss Scatcherd, seems to “escape” even more than Jane by not acknowledging the abuse: when Helen is punished, she goes off into a “sort of dream” (49), where nothing can harm her; the assumption being that punishment has no affect if one is not able to feel it. Her response is defined (rightly) as a form of passive resistance to the molding process at Lowood, and Helen is constantly punished, seemingly for “slatternly” behavior, but actually, as Miss Scatcherd once says, for being too “hardened” (47) to punishment. And as young Jane is able to sense, Helen is not escaping from the effects of the punishment at all; instead, she has formed a sort of masochistic relationship to it. Accepting all punishment whether just or unjust without comment, Helen sails above the abuse as a Christian “martyr” (Gilbert and Gubar 346), whose complete lack of rage and acceptance of others’ sin make her more superior in the eyes of God.

But as in Jane’s rejection after the red room, Helen’s acceptance of the deathly punishment eventually leads her towards death - a passive form of suicide in which the anger
(which Jane has learned to direct outwards, towards others), is continually turned inwards, onto herself. The result is a severely depressed child who embraces death as a way of finally escaping from a world in which (as Miss Scatcherd has repeatedly implied) she is not worthy to exist: "I leave no one to regret me much: I have only a father, and he is lately married, and will not miss me. By dying young, I shall escape great sufferings. I had not qualities or talents to make my way very well in the world: I should have been continually at fault" (73-4).

At eighteen, Jane finally leaves Lowood to find "a new servitude" (77) at Thornfield. There are, however, long-term effects of emotional and physical abuse on Jane's adult self, and Brontë leads her through a process of healing from those effects. The first description of the "adult" Jane's inner self occurs in the scene where Jane shows Rochester her watercolors (and symbolically, her inner self). Jane by this time has apparently changed from the passionate, impulsive child she was at Gateshead. She has lived at Lowood School for eight years, an "inmate of its walls" (75). The years at this institution have imprisoned the passionate Jane inside the prim Jane: those old, impulsive instincts have been curbed, mashed, and pushed back behind a more appealing and acceptable front. The Jane who meets Mr. Rochester has her hair neatly combed and pulled back, her dress unwrinkled, her face set in a demure, but honest expression.
She says at Lowood she had learned to imitate her mentor, Miss Temple: "I had imbibed from her something of her nature and much of her habits; more harmonious thoughts, what seemed better regulated feelings had become the inmates of my mind" (76). But the word "inmates" implies that this "demeanor," this calm, rational mentality, is something alien to Jane's character, something which must be maintained through a great deal of vigorous effort.

Yet the eighteen-year-old governess seems at peace. Except for some honest, blunt outbursts, her manner is usually very calm, practical, and subdued, that is until an outside observer (like Rochester) looks closely at her paintings:

The first represented clouds low and livid, rolling over a swollen sea: all the distance was in eclipse; so, too was the foreground; or rather, the nearest billows, for there was no land. One gleam of light lifted into relief a half-submerged mast, on which sat a cormorant, dark and large, with wings flecked with foam; its beak held a gold bracelet, set with gems...Sinking below the bird and mast, a drowned corpse glanced through the green water; a fair arm was the only limb clearly visible, whence the bracelet had been washed or torn (116).

The only human form is a corpse which has been submerged underwater. This image may reflect what the young artist at Lowood feels about herself, submerged and deadened under the stifling rigidity of her own Lowood manners. The arm is the only thing visible, and it is a "fair" arm, lovely to observe when it is bejeweled with a gold bracelet. This "arm" symbolizes the role women like Blanche Ingram and Georgiana Reed have in Jane Eyre: valued only for their physical
beauty, they exist to model their clinking jewels, feathery plumes, and fine lace.

Jane however is not even allowed to be publicly decorous; something has snatched the bracelet out of her grasp, and the corpse (or plain, poor Jane) slips unnoticed into the green water. This vision reveals someone who feels victimized, forced to submerge and deny everything that she is. And as the painting shows, molding herself to the female norm does not guarantee security, for Jane can be easily shunned by a society that finds her physically unappealing and therefore, of no use. The cormorant will keep the bracelet in its beak and watch her drown.

The third painting that Jane shows Mr. Rochester focuses on the same theme:

The third showed the pinnacle of an iceberg piercing a polar winter sky, a muster of northern lights reared their dim lances, close serried, along the horizon. Throwing these into distance, rose, in the foreground, a head - a colossal head, inclined towards the iceberg, and resting against it. Two thin hands, joined under the forehead, and supporting it, draw up before the lower features a sable veil; a brow blank of meaning, but for the glassiness of despair, alone were visible. Above the temples, amidst wreathed turban folds of black drapery, vague in its character and consistency as a cloud, gleamed a ring cf white flame, gemmed with sparkles of more lurid tinge (116).

The creature though not dead, has just as much ability to move as the drowned corpse. It has no body to control; its "thin hands" draw up a veil that would muffle any words coming out of its mouth. "Folds of black drapery" hide its face from the outside world; it has no way to express itself except through the eyes, which project despair and death.
This "woman" seems to parallel the creature Jane thinks she has become: her true nature muffled behind a bland exterior, and willingly snuffed out by herself. Jane in this image is both victim and victimizer: the same creature who holds up the veil to cover her own mouth, peers out from above it with empty, hopeless eyes.

There is one element that repeats itself throughout all these visions: the figure, whether it is victimized (the victim on the gallows, the drowned corpse), or suffering (the head reclined against an iceberg), is left friendless and alone, usually racked by the waves of vast, icy oceans. Like the wintry landscapes, the specific figure stops appearing when Jane meets Rochester. For the first time she has found a companion who is her equal, a "friend" (192), someone who understands the depth of the person behind those paintings, who can talk and joke in her language (they speak fancifully of elves leaving England, or bluntly of their emotions), who becomes for her a fellow "spirit" (240). Those stilted, thwarted emotions are now directed at an object outside herself, and the paintings that follow jump drastically from surreal images to realistic sketches of herself, Blanche Ingram, and Mr. Rochester. Painting now becomes a tool, a way for her first to suppress, and then to confront her new emotions.

Jane's love affair with Rochester reopens all the old wounds from the years of abuse, and forces her into a
bewildering, frightening conflict that pits her desperate need for love against her instinct for self-preservation. She clings to Rochester because he is the first to offer her sincere, romantic love, and her demand for love is overwhelming after all the years of emotional neglect. As Moglen says “Her deprivation of love has been too great and has lasted too long” (115). The result of this need is that Jane’s love for Rochester almost turns to the “idolatry” of her Angrian heroines, Mina Laury and Caroline Vernon. As Jane describes during her courtship: “My future husband was becoming to me my whole world; and more than the world; almost my hope of heaven...I could not, in those days, see God for his creature: of whom I had made an idol” (260-261). Jane follows Rochester’s grateful affection blindly, at the expense of her own emotional integrity. Though her dreams attest to her subconscious fear of Rochester, her demand for love makes her unwilling to analyze his faults, thus leaving her dangerously compliant.

Jane’s idolatry is understandable, as Rochester is Brontë’s most successful Byronic hero, a highly-developed version of Zamorna (Ratchford, Web 204), who embodies both the father-love and sexuality of the Zamorna in Caroline Vernon without the blatant incestual overtones. Rochester eagerly assumes the role of father/protector for Jane, calling her a “child” (237), a “little sunny-faced girl” (245), his “little ewe lamb who was as dear to him as a daughter” (283). But Jane is no half-grown child like
Caroline Vernon, and at least consciously, sees no problem with Rochester as a father/lover (which eases any discomfort for the reader). Her response to Mrs. Fairfax’s criticism of her marriage to Rochester ("He might almost be your father") is quick and confident: "No, indeed, Mrs. Fairfax!...Mr. Rochester looks as young, and is as young, as some men at five-and-twenty" (251).

Rochester’s "youth" (i.e., his sexual energy) combined with his fatherly desire to take care of Jane make him overwhelmingly attractive in her eyes. Yet his sexual energy is also what makes him highly dangerous: for Rochester, in his determination to "own" Jane, threatens to engulf her completely in his own fiery nature (Rigney 21). His devouring nature threatens Jane from the beginning of their courtship, as in the proposal scene, where a wary Jane watches Rochester finger all his "possessions" in his garden of trees "laden with ripening fruit": "...he strolls on, now lifting the gooseberry-tree branches to look at the fruit, large as plums, with which they are laden; now taking a ripe cherry from the wall; now stooping towards a knot of flowers, either to inhale their fragrance or to admire the dew-beads on their petals" (235). Aware of the sexual nature of the garden and Rochester’s desire for her, she is uncomfortable in his presence: "I did not like to walk at this hour alone with Mr. Rochester in the shadowy orchard" (236).
Rochester is also a danger to Jane because of his eager desire to make her one of his "possessions"; to shape her spirit into the kind of partner that can fit all his needs, and remain the complete opposite of that "clothed hyena" (279), Bertha. His teasing comment about the "fairy" to Adele contains in its playfulness Rochester's real desire for "Jane Rochester": "It was a fairy, and come from Elf-land, it said; and its errand was to make me happy: I must go with it out of the common world to a lonely place--such as the moon, for instance..." (254). Here we see both Rochester's definition of Jane's purpose ("to make me happy") and his desire to isolate Jane from the rest of the world (taking her to a "lonely place", the "moon") so she can center her attention on pleasing him, and he can avoid any revelation of his bigamy.

For Jane, self-preservation finally forces her to leave Rochester, since the "sprite" (260) that he is trying to mold her into makes him just another parent-patriarch (like Mrs. Reed and Brocklehurst) who attempts to force her spirit into a suffocating mold that deadens her inner self, what Rochester calls the "wild, free thing looking out of [that eye], defying me, with more than courage--with a stern triumph" (302). Her escape to Marsh End allows her a year of recovery, in which she gains in social and economic freedom, becoming an acknowledged lady (Moglen 135), and learns how to value her self-worth, thus protecting herself from what Jane sees as the menacing designs of St. John Rivers (Rigney 25).
The woman who returns to Rochester is able to hold her own against his previous "engulfment" (Rigney 30), and in fact, has now reversed the power roles to become the protective parent, the rescuer, of Rochester. As Moglen writes, Jane becomes her lover’s "mother" more than his wife (143), and takes the masculine, conqueror’s role in the last of Jane Eyre’s fairy tale twists: "Jane seeking Rochester at Ferndean reminds us paradoxically--yet justly--of the Prince who comes to awaken the sleeping Beauty with a kiss. Their roles are now reversed" (141). The journey which began with Jane as a helpless, abused child has carried her through to safety: her abusers are punished, her inner self is brought to a state of wholeness, and she has moved from the weak child to the all-powerful parent, who judges her former "master" with love and mercy.
CHAPTER IV

BRONTÉ’S “MORBID” HEROINE: READING LUCY SNOWE AS AN INCEST SURVIVOR

Lucy Snowe in Villette may be read as an incest survivor whose psychic journey is aborted. During her mental breakdown, Lucy faces her abused self and then runs from it, choosing instead to maintain a carefully built facade that masks the symptoms of incest: a deep desire to become invisible, an intense hatred of one’s own body, and a deep-set fear of human contact (Bass, 35-7). The real action of the aborted journey moves under a system of symbols and doubling, while in the static, plodding plot, an invisible Lucy records the day-to-day events of healthier lives.

Why incest? Or sexual abuse at all? Lucy never reveals any specific facts about her past trauma: there is no mention of her parents, only “the kinsfolk” with whom she “fixed (her) permanent residence” (4); there is no specific account of the trauma that turns her into a terrified, dysfunctional woman who refuses to connect to the outside world. The only bit of information the character will give is shrouded in metaphor:
Picture me then idle, basking, plump, and happy, stretched on a cushioned deck, warmed with constant sunshine, rocked by breezes indolently soft. However, it cannot be concealed that, in that case, I must somehow have fallen over-board, or that there must have been a wreck at last. I too well remember a time—a long time, of cold, of danger, of contention. To this hour, when I have the nightmare, it repeats the rush and saltiness of briny waves in my throat, and their icy pressure on my lungs. I even know there was a storm, and that not of one hour nor one day. For many days and nights neither sun nor stars appeared; we cast with our own hands the tackling out of the ship; a heavy tempest lay on us; all hope that we should be saved was taken away. In fine, the ship was lost, the crew perished (31-2).

The memory of this trauma (whatever it is) has remained with Lucy in the form of nightmares and controls her psyche for the entire novel. And as the only narrator of Villette, Lucy, by holding back information, is revealing how much control she has over the telling of her story and over the reader’s perception of her experience. Lucy, who suppresses her story as she tells it, will not say anything directly. Suggestions that she has suffered sexual abuse come from what Lucy perceives as normal, and from the symbolic language in the text. My investigation will focus on four parts of the narrative: the early relationship between Polly Home and her father; Lucy’s description of the Pension Beck and the nun; Lucy’s breakdown at the pension; and her subsequent rescue at the Brettons and courtship with M. Paul.

From the beginning Lucy’s narrative creates tension, as Polly Home and her father behave with highly charged intimacy in what Lucy calls the healthiest and most accepting of environments, the home of Louisa Bretton and her son, John
Graham. The house is an extension of the Brettons themselves, of a healthy psyche. There are no hidden attics or mouldering gardens; the house is wide-open to view, clean, well-ordered, with windows that open to a balcony, constantly connecting its inhabitants to the outside world. Mrs. Bretton serves as an extension of that openness with her long-term connection to the house by marriage: "her husband's family had been residents there for generations" (3). In personality as well as stability, she represents emotional health:

She was not young, as I remember her, but she was still handsome, tall, well-made, and though dark for an Englishwoman, yet wearing always the clearness of health in her brunette cheeks, and its vivacity in a pair of fine, cheerful black eyes...He [her son] inherited...her health without flaw, and her spirits of that tone and equality which are better than a fortune to the possessor (3).

Louisa Bretton resembles the juvenilia's heroine Zenobia Ellrington, and like Zenobia, Louisa gets her strength and power from her size and self confidence: she towers over the other women in the novel, especially Lucy and Polly. But Louisa Bretton is full of mother-love, not rage, and placidly serves as a mother-figure to Lucy, especially later in the novel as Lucy is recovering from her breakdown: "...her patronage...was not founded on conventional grounds of superior wealth or station...but on natural reasons of physical advantage: it was the shelter the tree gives the herb" (164).
Mrs. Bretton, however, cannot build emotional health in Lucy, since she remains untouched by and oblivious to Lucy’s pain. The “cheerful” dispositions (240) of both Mrs. Bretton and her son keep them dry and safe; they sail through life in happy ignorance. Lucy Snowe, recalling the metaphor of her childhood trauma, later calls her breakdown a “storm” (155), and the Bretton’s house a “cave in the sea,” a temporary haven in which she can’t hear the waves crashing above her (173). As much as Lucy longs for oblivion, it is something she cannot have: she is not ignorant of pain; she can only hide its scars from the outside world. And unlike Mrs. Bretton who uses her family history to establish a clear sense of self, Lucy is adrift, with no clear family and no home. Unlike Mrs. Bretton, Lucy must repress her past in order to survive it.

But the past cannot be buried, and Polly’s sudden arrival in the Bretton house may represent Lucy’s memory of sexual trauma: Lucy appears to be watching a reflection of her own experience when she observes Polly “playing” with her father. Lucy will meet Polly ten years after this initial meeting, and will immediately note that they share the same memory, Polly more vividly than Lucy herself: “I remember it with minute distinctness,” [says Polly], “not only the time, but the days of the time, and the hours of the days” (265). Lucy will also see Polly as her double: the one who understands her the most, who shares the same thoughts: “I
wondered to find my thoughts hers: there are certain things in which we so rarely meet with our double that it seems a miracle when the chance befals” (266).

Superficially, the relationship between six-year-old Polly and her doting father seems quite innocent, moulded by the conventions of Victorian sentimentalism and very similar to all those Dickensian father-daughter relationships where the daughter is deeply devoted and obedient, and the father is lovingly grateful. And certainly the Brettons see nothing wrong in the way father and daughter show their mutual admiration. But in a novel where no one touches sexually (Lucy and M. Paul, for example, chastely express their love by holding hands), there is too much intimacy between Polly and her father, especially in a scene like the following, which suggests to Lucy orgasmic pleasures:

He laid his hand on the child’s uplifted head. She said—“Kiss Polly.” He kissed her. I wished she would utter some hysterical cry, so that I might get relief and be at ease. She made wonderfully little noise; she seemed to have got what she wanted—all she wanted, and to be in a trance of content. Neither in mien or features was this creature like her sire, and yet she was of his strain; her mind had been filled from his, as the cup from the flagon (11-12).

Here Lucy empathizes completely with Polly, as if the two have become one: “I wished she would utter some hysterical cry, so that I might get relief and be at ease” (11), and the scenes that follow show this “little creature” (9) constantly at her father’s side, touching him, holding his hand, sitting in his lap. Like Dickens’ Little Dorrit,
Polly insists on performing as her father’s wife as well as his daughter: she must serve him his tea (though the cups move awkwardly in her hands), she must care for his domestic needs. The father-daughter relationship at the textual level is suspicious, but the evidence is not strong enough to be substantial. The relationship is established in the subtext of Lucy’s narrative, and in the description of Polly herself.

Polly is another Brontë “woman/child,” the type Charlotte Brontë began to create at the age of sixteen, when she started writing the Glasstown tales (Novelettes, 15). Polly is especially interesting because she never leaves that limbo between child and woman: at six years old, she behaves like an adult trapped in a childish body; at seventeen, she has the body of a woman but the behavior of a child. Louisa Bretton and Lucy both notice Polly’s strange behavior, which is why they begin calling Polly “a little creature” (9), instead of a child. Arriving at the Bretton house, she appears as a voice wrapped up in a huge shawl, an authoritative voice (“Put me down, please” (5)) in a body that is too small and fragile to defend itself. Her fragility is noticed immediately by Lucy, who compares her to a doll: “Seated on my godmother’s ample lap, she looked a mere doll; her neck, delicate as wax, her head of silky curls, increased, I thought, the resemblance” (6).
Because she is so powerless in this adult world, Polly is obsessed with what she can control: her manner of dress, her sewing kit. But her frantic attempts to control her body through ladylike dignity and careful dress are useless; her body is moved about at will. Graham Bretton, for example, torments Polly by throwing her in the air, or grabbing her for a kiss. Polly’s young adult mind is trapped in a body that serves as the plaything for the men in the house, and she is amusing to them (and to Lucy) because of the constant frustration she shows at her helplessness.

But Polly has conflicting desires: the desire to protect herself, versus a desperate need for attention and love. Mina Laury would rather die than lose Zamorna’s love; Polly becomes spiritually dead once her father leaves her behind: “She seemed growing old and unearthly...whenever, opening a room-door, I found her seated in a corner alone, her head in her pigmy hand, that room seemed not inhabited, but haunted” (9-10). The conflict results in Polly’s accepting affection from John Graham, whose intimacy continues to attract and irritate her.

The sexuality in Polly’s relationships is infused in Lucy’s descriptions of her. Here is one example:

Opposite where he [John Graham Bretton] has placed himself was seated Mr. Home, and at his elbow, the child. When I say child I use an inappropriate and undescriptive term—a term suggesting any picture rather than that of the demure little person in a mourning frock and white chemisette, that might just have fitted a good-sized doll—perched now in a high
chair beside a stand, whereon was her toy work-box of white varnished wood, and holding in her hands a shred of a handkerchief, which she was professing to hem, and at which she bored perseveringly with a needle, that in her fingers seemed almost a skewer, pricking herself ever and anon, marking the cambric with a track of minute red dots; occasionally starting when the perverse weapon—swerving from her control—inflicted a deeper stab than usual; but still silent, diligent, absorbed, womanly (13).

The passage makes clear that Lucy denies Polly’s childishness, (and therefore her innocence) in this symbolically sexual scene. Polly is seated in an insecure place where she is limited in movement “perched now in a high chair beside a stand” (13), seated between two “male-lovers,” her father (who always sees her as his “little girl” (411), even when she is an adult) and John Graham (who becomes her next love-object and later her husband). Perched in this place she proceeds to stab herself over and over again with a needle, leaving a trail of blood-spots on the handkerchief she is making for her father. As with her shawl, her clothes, and the teacup, she cannot control the phallic/needle (“the perverse weapon—swerving from her control—inflicted a deeper stab than usual;” (13)) but withstands the pain stoically in order to maintain her dutiful love. Polly pays for male affection with silence (and perhaps acquiescence to sexual abuse); she will cry silently when “papa” (11) leaves her, suffer the stabs of the needle with “diligent, absorbed, womanly” (13) peace, and kiss Graham’s foot under the table when he unknowingly kicks her (28)—all so that she can receive some kind of affection.
In the relationship between Polly and the teenage boy, John Bretton, Brontë shows how Polly is being trained to please. John Graham, upon being introduced to Polly, announces his intention: “I am going to be a favourite; preferred before papa soon, I dare say” (15). He immediately then lifts Polly up in the air, and Polly, trapped in his arms, sees a reflection of herself in relationship to him: “he caught her up with one hand, and with that one hand held her poised aloft above his head. She saw herself thus lifted up on high, in the glass above the fireplace. The suddenness, the freedom, the disrespect of the action were too much” (15). The action confuses Polly, who feels automatically the violation of her body (“the disrespect of the action” (15)) but has no way of protecting herself from it, no way of avoiding that shocked little girl in the mirror. John Graham then starts a system of teasing Polly, in which she receives gifts (of his attention, caresses, compliments) on the basis of how “nice” she is to him. In this scene, for example, Graham is demanding payment for his picture of a spaniel:

“Shall I tell you what I will do with the picture if you refuse it?”
She half turned to listen.
“Cut it into strips for lighting the taper.”
“No!”
“But I shall.”
“Please--don’t.”
Graham waxed inexorable on hearing the pleading tone; he took the scissors from his mother’s work-casket.
“Here goes!” said he, making a menacing flourish.
“Right through Fido’s head, and splitting little Harry’s nose.”
“No! No! NO!”
"Then come to me. Come quickly, or it is done."
She hesitated, lingered, but complied.
"Now, will you have it?" he asked, as she stood
before him.
"Please."
"But I shall want payment."
"How much?"
"A kiss" (17).

Lucy will later compare Polly to a spaniel, the eager, loyal
little animal that scurries around M. Paul’s feet (399).

Once Polly’s father is gone and the child feels
emotionally abandoned, she accepts John’s conditions
completely, doing whatever she can to please him. Feeding
him breakfast brings her great praise, and Graham’s promise
that “when he had a house of his own, she should be his
housekeeper, and perhaps—if she showed any culinary genius--
his cook” (20). To maintain that flow of praise she
continues to serve him, watching over his meals as she did
for her father, entertaining him, accepting his caresses,
becoming his playtoy, his entertainer, his adoring admirer.
The boundaries that define her as someone apart from him
begin to weaken; as Lucy says, she only comes alive in his
presence; away from him, she remains “not interesting” (21).

Lucy, meanwhile, reports all these events “objectively”
from the sidelines. Split apart from her own desperate need
for love and her rage, she views Polly with a mix of fury,
disgust, resentment, and admiration, all mixed in with a cool
facade she presents to the reader and herself. Looking at
Polly, she is looking I think at her memory of her own sexual
and emotional abuse, and her mind “splits” (Bass, 42) into
watching and not watching, remembering only what is safe and minimizing the rest. Lucy, in response to her own trauma, has frozen all her feelings, and the narrative is full of her proud claims to invulnerability: "I, Lucy Snowe, was calm." (19); "I--watching calmly from the window..."(10). Yet despite Lucy's protestations of disinterest (she says Polly is just an amusing character study(26)), she is fascinated by Polly (the pivotal character in this early narrative) and continually disgusted at Polly’s groveling for male attention, comparing her much later to the pretty spaniel that runs around Monsieur Paul’s feet: "She [the spaniel] was very tiny, and had the prettiest little innocent face, the silkiest long ears, the finest dark eyes in the world. I never saw her, but I thought of Pauline de Bassompierre: forgive the association, reader, it would occur" (399).

Finally, Lucy worries about whether Polly can survive with no defenses against emotional pain (31). The two together, the older child who has "forgotten" the abuse and the one who carries the memory, sit together in the Bretton’s house, looking at Graham’s picturebook:

...here--most strange of all--is a land of ice and snow, without green fields, woods, or gardens. In this land, they found some mammoth bones: there are no mammoths now....You don’t know what it was; but I can tell you, because Graham told me. A mighty, goblin creature, as high as this room, and as long as the hall; but not a fierce, flesh-eating thing, Graham thinks. He believes, if I met one in a forest, it would not kill me, unless I came quite in its way; when it would trample me down amongst the bushes, as I might tread on a grasshopper in a hayfield without knowing it (27).
Like Jane Eyre’s paintings and long descriptive dreams, the pictures in Graham’s book are a break in the plot, a description that serves the subtext. That extinct “mammoth” symbolizes the enraged abused child; invisible to those in control (“there are no mammoths now”, Graham says) and buried so deep (in “a land of ice and snow”) that it can only be unearthed after a deep search. Polly makes it clear that Lucy has never seen the monster (“you don’t know what it was”), but that Graham, who controls the monster (he has the book), has the power to define it (“You don’t know what it was; but I can tell you, because Graham told me”). In Brontë’s schema, the oppressor understands the rage of his victim, even more than the victim herself does: As M. Paul says to Lucy: “You are one of those beings who must be kept down. I know you! I know you!” (147).

The oppressor’s depiction of the monster is also telling in what it alters: the monster (female rage) may be huge but not dangerous (“but not a fierce, flesh-eating thing, Graham thinks,” unlike Bertha Mason), and the best way to avoid the monster is to stay out of its way. John Graham, as the adult Dr. John, becomes very instrumental in keeping both Lucy and Polly from that inner rage: it is he who insists that what Lucy sees in the attic is a delusion (“a spectral illusion” (239)), and he who saves Polly from being trampled underfoot, when the raging Vashti “releases” a fire that sends the crowd running frantically for safety in the theatre.
This section of the narrative ends with Lucy embracing Polly the night before she must leave the Bretton house to rejoin her father. Inconsolable at leaving John Graham, Lucy carries her to him, and then carries her back to bed, holding her in her arms when Polly cannot stop sobbing. Embracing Polly begins a pattern where Lucy (who hates otherwise to touch or be touched) makes physical contact with little girls who represent some part of her self: for example, Madame Beck's youngest daughter; the cretin; the child who cries when M. Paul's departure from Villette is announced. This early scene, however, is the most complete account of the outer and inner child bonding as one:

I saw the little thing shiver. "Come to me," I said, wishing, yet scarcely hoping, that she would comply: for she was a most strange, capricious, little creature, and especially whimsical with me. She came, however, instantly, like a small ghost gliding over the carpet. I took her in. She was chill; I warmed her in my arms. She trembled nervously; I soothed her. Thus tranquilized and cherished she at last slumbered. (31)

Lucy's subsequent journey away from the Bretton's, to the guardianships of Mrs. Marchmont and Madame Beck, is a journey away from the inner self. Both places represent a refuge, a "safe asylum" (163), where Lucy hones the coping mechanisms that protect her from men and from her own rage.

Miss Marchmont is a vision of Lucy Snowe's future self (old, alone, unloved), and a warning of what burial does to the self: Miss Marchmont is crippled ("a rheumatic cripple, impotent, foot and hand" (32)) from a disease that works from
the inside of the body to paralyze its victim. The disease is clearly a metaphor for Miss Marchmont’s emotional state: once she buries the memory of her fiancé’s death, she is forced to bury the emotions that could bring the memory back to life, and therefore lives “frozen” as an emotional and physical cripple. The adolescent Lucy sees nothing wrong in Miss Marchmont’s life; in fact, having already chosen the same path for herself, Lucy is initially quite content: “Tame and still by habit, disciplined by destiny, I demanded no walks in the fresh air; my appetite needed no more than the tiny messes served for an invalid” (34). Lucy does not learn much from Miss Marchmont that she doesn’t already know. What she receives instead is a place to hide for years and a daily “morsel” (34) of cold-blooded regard that Lucy eagerly calls “affection” (34). As one of the three “caves in the sea” (173) that Lucy will hide in, Miss Marchmont’s abode makes the least demands on her, and keeps her the furthest away from life.

Once Miss Marchmont dies, Lucy seems to make the kind of life-change that Jane makes in *Jane Eyre*; she decides to take a complete risk and travel to London. Like Jane Eyre, Lucy hears her direction from a stellar source: “a moving mystery—the Aurora Borealis” (39). But unlike Jane Eyre, Lucy’s courage is superficial, her optimism too much at odds with her nature. Jane is determined to live; Lucy Snowe is still terrified of life, and drawn to a living death. At first in London, real life transforms her: she eats heartily
("it was years since I had felt such healthy hunger" [44]); she seems to be awakening from a long sleep ("I had a sudden feeling as if I, who had never yet truly lived, were at last about to taste life" [43]). But the awakening is not successful because she still keeps her past and memories at bay, and as a result, that "unsettled sadness" (4) invades her as she is on her way to Belgium, and pushes her again towards death: "Down the sable flood we glided; I thought of the Styx, and of Charon rowing some solitary soul to the Land of Shades" (46).

Charlotte Brontë, from the earliest juvenilia, experimented with landscape as metaphor, with landscapes that (like the Angrian gardens and estates) represent the female body. *Villette* continues that tradition, as Lucy’s next refuge, the "Pensionnat de Demoiselles" (59) builds into a metaphor for the heroine’s body and memory. The pension is used two ways in the novel: it represents the sexuality that Lucy is trying to escape from, and it provides Lucy with trainers (Madame Beck and M. Paul) who keep her from an awareness of that sexuality. The part of the school to which the outside world has access is quite normal: a French maid runs to open the door, and young girls chatter in bright, airy schoolrooms. But set behind the pension, in "deep and leafy seclusion" (99) is a haunted garden:

A vague tale went of a black and white nun, sometimes, on some night or nights of the year, seen in some part of this vicinage. The ghost must have been built out some ages ago, for there were houses all
round now; but certain convent-relics, in the shape of old and huge fruit-trees, yet consecrated the spot; and, at the foot of one—a Methuselah of a pear-tree, dead, all but a few boughs which still faithfully renewed their perfumed snow in spring, and their honey-sweet pendants in autumn—you saw, in scraping away the mossy earth between the half-bared roots, a glimpse of slab, smooth, hard and black (99).

Freud described the psyche as a "buried city," and analysis as excavating the hidden layers of the self (Gay, 171). In this garden (the only fertile place in an otherwise dark and sterile prison, and a Freudian symbol of female sexuality), Lucy is constantly drawn to the most remote part of the garden, this "Methusaleh of a pear tree" (99), which can only be approached through "l'allée défendue": "Teachers might indeed go there with impunity; but as the walk was narrow, and the neglected shrubs were grown very thick and close on each side, weaving overhead a roof of branch and leaf which the sun's rays penetrated but in rare chequers, this alley was seldom entered even during day, and after dusk was carefully shunned" (101). In Freudian terms, the path is symbolic of the female genitals; it is secretive, dark, leading to another sexual place (the buried nun), and in this ex-convent, avoided by all the other women of the pension.

Lucy ignores the social stigma on this place, and for reasons she doesn't quite understand, continues to walk "l'allée défendue" night after night. She is especially attracted to a bench covered with mould and fungus which sits on top of the grave of the buried nun, and finally decides to clean the bench for herself, making this "her place" in the
garden. The nun, buried underneath Lucy’s resting place, was punished for what seems to have been a sexual crime:

The legend went, unconfirmed and unaccredited, but still propogated, that this was the portal of a vault, imprisoning deep beneath that ground, on whose surface grass grew and flowers bloomed, the bones of a girl whom a monkish conclave of the drear middle ages, had here buried alive, for some sin against her vow (99).

A young woman is buried (and silenced) for some sexual act, by a group of “holy” men (“a monkish conclave” ).

Besides her time spent by the nun’s burial site, Lucy’s life in the Pension is interrupted five times by the ghost of the buried nun, who “appears to Lucy” as Charles Burkhart states, “at moments of great passion, when she is an actor in her own life” (113-17). The nun appears especially when Lucy is closest to romantic intimacy: when she is reading Dr. John’s letter for the first time or engaging in a deep conversation with M. Paul. Gilbert and Gubar define the ghost as representing what society has determined as Lucy’s fate: “...the nun is not only a projection of Lucy’s desire to submit in silence, to accept confinement, to dress in shadowy black, to conceal her face, to desexualize herself; the nun’s way is also symbolic for Lucy of the only socially acceptable life available to single women—a life of service, self-abnegation, and chastity” (426). But the ghost can also be a symbol of insufficiently buried memory, the sexual memory that Polly represents and that Lucy is trying her best to erase.
Lucy Snowe first encounters the nun in the attic, the place the children in the juvenilia (the young Duke of Wellington, for example) always go to spy on ghosts and where Bertha Mason, the “ghost” of Jane Eyre’s rage, is confined. In the early stories, the attics are where the young explorers can play with death, by peeking through doors at the ghosts, or recoiling at a ghostly touch while pretending to sleep. It is a place where the children can examine their fear of death. Lucy, by spending so much time pondering by the gravesite, is also subconsciously exploring her worst terror, her memory; but the sudden appearances of the nun take the exploration out of Lucy’s hands and terrify her. The nun however, is as mute as Lucy’s vague descriptions of her past horror: stifled by the white cloth across her face, she can only look at Lucy with “cold”, “glittering “eyes (241). The nun, like the grimacing cretin, is always silent.

Besides representing Lucy’s repressed sexual memory and her fear of that memory recurring, the pension also contains Lucy’s rage. But the rage in Villette is a far cry from the explosive rage of Jane Eyre’s Bertha Mason. In Villette, strong capable characters are quite good natured, and anger is only displayed by smaller, less threatening characters, children like Desirée, for example, or the diminutive Monsieur Paul. And lording over both these figures in the pension is the “surveillance” (136) Madame Beck, whose primary interest (and connection to Lucy) is suppression. As Gilbert and Gubar note, “Madame Beck is a symbol of
repression, the projection and embodiment of Lucy's commitment to self-control" (408).

Madame Beck is best understood in her actions towards her monster-daughter, Desirée, a story which is a reworking of the story "The Silver Cup: A Tale," which Charlotte had created at the age of thirteen. In the original story, a father brings home a mystical silver cup which wrecks havoc on the family, creating rage and morbid curiosity in children who were otherwise peaceful. The cup turns the two-year-old daughter, Cina, into a violent monster, who blindly destroys her mother's well-loved glass ship: "...Cina seated on the rich, Persian carpet and busily engaged with an elegant parasol, now all torn and broken, in smashing the beautiful ship to pieces and about to crack the delicate masts and cordage. (Cina) gave a laugh like an idiot" (Alexander 71). After all the children have vented their rage with great pleasure, the father destroys the silver cup, and the family returns to normal. The rage disappears, and the glass ship is magically "mended by invisible hands" (Alexander 73).

Like Cina, little Desirée is a whirlwind of violence who gets pleasure from creating chaos: "She would steal to their attics, open their drawers and boxes, wantonly tear their best caps and soil their best shawls; she would watch her opportunity to get at the beaufet of the salle à manger, where she would smash articles of porcelain or glass" (87). It's as if rage has completely consumed the child, and there is nothing of the "child" left; like the cretin, she behaves
like a "strange tameless animal" (149), grabbing at whatever
she can get: "she would plunder the preserves, drink the
sweet wine, break jars and bottles, and so contrive as to
throw the onus of suspicion on the cook and kitchen-maid"
(87). The implication here, as with Vashti and Bertha Mason,
seems to be that rage once allowed into the female body, is
all-consuming, destroying the "healthier" parts of the psyche
and turning a civilized woman into an animal. It is better,
and safer, Brontë seems to say, to keep rage apart from the
rest of the self. As Madame Beck says: "Desirée a besoin
d’une surveillance toute particulière" (87).

Madame Beck is central to the second way that the
pension functions in the novel: as a place of refuge that
protects Lucy from men and teaches her how to avoid her own
sexuality. The first description of the pension is as a
sexual refuge: Lucy comes to it desperately, running away
from "insolent men" who make lewd remarks to her as she runs
through the town’s dark, mouldering streets. Madame Beck and
M. Paul, by allowing her to reside within their walls, become
her immediate rescuers; in fact, Lucy’s initial impression of
Madame Beck is of someone harmless and "motherly": "a
motherly, dumpy little woman, in a large shawl, a wrapping-
gown, and a clean, trim night-cap" (60). But like Polly,
Madame Beck’s appearance is deceptive: Madame is not a
nurturer but a keeper. In this dark fantasy world of the
pension, with its mystical creatures and haunted attics,
Madame Beck acts as the part of the self which silences Lucy,
keeping her sexuality and emotions deeply buried, and helping her to maintain a facade that satisfies the outside world. Incest survivors often speak of feeling split in two, having an outside self that maintains a facade of normality, and an inside, often nonverbal self that screams out in agony, and veers most closely to insanity. It is Madame Beck who ensures that Lucy keeps self from self, maintaining the wall that keeps her "sanity," until the "long vacation" (145) in which Lucy Snowe, finally left alone, comes face to face with her inner self.

One of the ways Madame Beck keeps Lucy safe is to protect her physically from men, to see that only "safe" men come into the house, and to watch Lucy carefully whenever she is in their presence. Madame Beck is running a school that is still in many ways a convent, keeping all her inmates in virgin white and barring men from physical contact with her students. The most dramatic example of this confinement is Madame "cording" off the men into a dark corner during a ball, refusing the pleading of the "wolves" to dance with her students (135).

Lucy goes a step further than Madame Beck; she escapes male attention by erasing her feminine identity. She does this quite successfully by dressing in the drabbest, plainest clothes, "hiding" in shadowy corners, and keeping her speech limited to monosyllables in front of attractive men like Dr. John. In her dull clothes she becomes almost invisible: "a
shadowy spot on a field of light” (123), a “colourless shadow” (147). Her plan works well: Dr. John takes no notice of his presence; he pays her the same attention that he would “unobtrusive articles of furniture” (91). The complete negation of her body keeps Lucy safe: she can observe others, especially Dr. John, without ever being noticed. And Lucy, now invisible, can walk the streets of Villette without fear of physical threat: “I went to church and I took walks, and I am very well convinced that nobody minded me” (104).

There are, however, three problems with Lucy’s desire to “erase” her body. The first is that though it provides safety from male sexuality, it conflicts with her great desire for male attention and acceptance. “Erased,” she is sexually ignored and treated as a nonentity, something that makes her very bitter, the more attracted she becomes to Dr. John. “ Trying then to keep down the unreasonable pain which thrilled my heart, on thus being made to feel that while Graham could devote to others...interest, he had no more than light raillery for Lucy” (302). As the lovely young Ginevra says to Lucy: “ though you might have your own heart broken, no living heart will you ever break” (138). The alternative to being invisible, however, is the terrifying prospect of being rejected as a woman, something she can barely face in her conversation with her lover, M. Paul. As Lucy says while waiting for his judgement on her appearance: “…I never remember the time when I had not a haunting dread of what
might be the degree of my outward deficiency; this dread pressed me at the moment with special force" (463).

Another problem is that the ultimate goal of erasing one’s body is suicide; the self-hatred that fuels Lucy’s desire to disassociate from her body moves her gradually towards death. Her self-loathing is apparent each time she looks in a mirror, as in this scene, where she is trying to connect the coiffeur’s success with her hair to the body she has already disowned:

I took my turn with the rest, and could hardly believe what the glass said when when I applied to it for information afterwards; the lavish garlandry of woven brown hair amazed me—I feared it was not all my own, and it required several convincing pulls to give assurance to the contrary. I then acknowledged in the coiffeur a first-rate artist—-one who certainly made the most of indifferent materials (123).

This luxurious hair frightens Lucy. She will not completely acknowledge it as her own, since that would mean the acceptance of herself as feminine, perhaps even as sexual. Her reaction to that possibility is immediate: the result is a fluke, created completely by the coiffeur (“a first-rate artist”); her hair, separated from her self, is by nature as bland and dull as the rest of her “indifferent materials.” The woman who looks back in the mirror is an artist’s deception. The insistence on herself as a “no/body” (138) a nothing, is emphasized by Lucy’s foil, Ginevra, whose beautiful blond hair, huge blue eyes, and youthful figure attract all the men Lucy, either by looks or effort, has barred from her life. Ginevra forces Lucy to stand next to
her in a mirror, and her judgment on Lucy as "nobody’s
daughter" (138), as unloved and unwanted, confirms the self-
hatred Lucy has already nurtured within herself.

Finally, erasing the body doesn’t erase the desires of
the body. Madame Beck does her best to keep men out of the
presence of her students, and to keep them pure and
"virginal" (123). But the enforcement of "rules" and Madame
Beck’s constant, spying presence, do not keep the girls from
being, as Madame Beck believes, basic animals, too stupid to
control their own lusts without her help. They were so used
to "constraint," that "relaxation," Madame says, "however
guarded, would be misunderstood and fatally presumed on"
(67). In accepting Madame Bretton’s definition of these young
women, and of female sexuality in general, Lucy is accepting
the belief that female sexuality is like rage, dangerous
unless it is strictly guarded. Her attitude towards
discipline is a good description of how she views sexuality,
hers own and theirs: "the little they had (of self respect)
was trained to be crushed, and it rather liked the pressure
of a firm heel, than otherwise" (77). It is Lucy’s
acceptance of Madame’s "firm heel," of pure surveillance over
her own rage and sexuality, that limits her ability to cope
with the flood of emotions during her mental breakdown.

Lucy Snowe’s eight-week "vacation" (145) alone in the
pension, which leads to a mental breakdown, is difficult to
understand because it is a melding together of many different
sources: much of the account, for example, is taken directly
from Brontë’s own experiences with severe depression, from 1844-45, the year after she left Brussels and M. Heger (Gerin, 265), and in 1848-49, in which Branwell, Emily and Anne all died within months of each other (Gerin, 580). Some of the passage also connects to patterns of sexual abuse.

Lucy Snowe has a breakdown mainly because she is left alone in this pension (body/psyche), and deprived of the suppressors (Madame Beck, M. Paul) who were crucial in keeping Lucy’s mind clear of memories and in separating Lucy from her inner self. Alone, she has no one surveying her movements and secrets, no one to guard against, and without students to teach, nothing outside herself to observe. Her mind, like the cretin’s, becomes steeped in “lethargy” (149), her inner vigilance weakens, and she begins to look inward for the first and perhaps last time.

One of the major stages in healing from sexual abuse is called the “emergency stage” (Bass, 65), in which the abused woman has subconsciously released the floodgates of her memory, and looks for the first time at the “inner child” (Bass 111), the battered child of the psyche who has been forgotten during adulthood, ignored along with the memory of abuse. This stage often wrecks havoc on the woman, sending her into an emotional breakdown which leaves her isolated and terrified. Often she cannot sleep; haunted by memories in the form of nightmares, she may become physically ill; she often fears that she is going mad. The “healing” takes place during the process, as the woman remembers the memory in
whatever form, and acknowledges the child as part of herself (Bass, 67).

Lucy Snowe goes through a “stalled” version of the emergency stage when she is left alone to care for the cretin, the reflection of her deformed inner self. She says this creature has been left abandoned: “a poor deformed and imbecile pupil, a sort of cretin whom her stepmother in a distant province would not allow to return home” (148). Lucy is forced to become intimate with this creature, who makes her physically sick, to feed and care for it daily, rarely leaving its sight. For the first few weeks, through pleasant weather, she, like Lucy, remains in a sort of mental “paralysis” (149): “Her weak faculties approved of ineration: her brain, her eyes, her ears, her heart slept content; they could not wake to work, so lethargy was their Paradise” (149). But the storms that appear suddenly turn this once peaceful creature into a raging monster.

Storms have already been established in Villette as the force that connects Lucy to her passionate, but suppressed emotions: “certain accidents of the weather” she says “...were almost dreaded by me, because they woke the being I was always lulling; and stirred up a craving cry I could not satisfy” (102). After the storms which “paralyze” (149) Lucy, the scarred, abandoned creature, the inner self, becomes almost uncontrollable:
The hapless creature had been at times a heavy charge; I could not take her out beyond the garden, and I could not leave her a minute alone; for her poor mind, like her body, was warped; its propensity was to evil. A vague bent to mischief, an aimless malevolence made constant vigilance indispensable. As she very rarely spoke, and would sit for hours together moping and mowing and distorting her features with indescribable grimaces, it was more like being prisoned with some strange tameless animal, than associating with a human being. Then there were personal attentions to be rendered which required the nerve of a hospital nurse; my resolution was so tried, it sometimes fell dead sick (149-150).

This event parallels Jane Eyre’s dream of the infant: "...I still carried the unknown little child: I might not lay it down anywhere, however tired were my arms--however much it impeded my progress, I must retain it" (Jane Eyre 268). Lucy too, is impeded by her charge who traps her in the garden, the same place that “hides” her sexual secret. Lucy describes the creature as “evil” (149), perhaps mad, certainly too dangerous to be exposed to the outside world (a belief shared by other caretakers of raging selves in Brontë’s fiction: Caroline with her mother Louisa Dance; Rochester with Bertha). The creature is nonverbal (since Lucy refuses to give it a voice) and unable to direct its rage (Lucy never names or blames her perpetrators). And like the other child-self Polly, the cretin unleashes its frustration silently: Polly cries so secretly that only Lucy sees her tears (7), and the cretin vents her rage in silence (“she rarely spoke” (149)), while making “indescribable grimaces” (149). The implication here that unsuppressed rage creates a “deformed” (148) self, a “strange, tameless animal”
(149), corresponds both to what Brontë creates in Bertha, and to what she develops later in Villette in the description of Vashti’s performance.

Lucy is evasive with her unwanted charge: physical intimacy with the cretin makes her “sick” (150), and she is greatly relieved when the creature is removed from the pension by an aunt. But the disappearance of this self does not mean that Lucy is back to normal, for having gone this far on her journey, she has pushed herself into a sort of limbo. Without the coping mechanisms she is not completely frozen emotionally, and her abrupt halt of the process into her inner self leaves her with feelings she can neither explain nor escape. The unwelcome emotions drive her mad, as she tries desperately to run from them by leaving the pension: “A goad thrust me on, a fever forbade me to rest; a want of companionship maintained in my soul the cravings of a most deadly famine. I often walked all day, through the burning noon and the arid afternoon, and the dusk evening, and came back with moonrise” (150).

The fears that wrack her appear in the form of sleeplessness, or when she can sleep, in an “indescribable” (152) nightmare that terrifies her. Awake she can keep the demons at bay, but asleep the subconscious takes over, and the nightmare brings her back to the same metaphor she uses to describe her original suffering, a wild and turbulent sea: “Between twelve and one that night a cup was forced to my lips, black, strong, strange, drawn from no well, but filled
up seething from a bottomless and boundless sea” (151). Here Lucy’s experience parallels that of her author, for the nightmare dredges up Charlotte Brontë’s two worst fears: the fear of being unloved, and the reigning terror of the juvenilia, the fear of death.

For Lucy, the fear of being unloved is the most devastating: “I thought the well-loved dead, who had loved me well in life, met me elsewhere, alienated: galled was my inmost spirit with an unutterable sense of despair about the future” (152). That fear, says Brontë’s biographer Winifred Gerin, was Charlotte Brontë’s consuming fear from the time of Maria’s death to the time she was writing *Villette*: “Not to be loved had been Charlotte’s ultimate dread since childhood. The nightmare of her schooldays, as Mary Taylor recalled, was the vision of her beloved dead sisters, returned, but changed towards her; unloving and censorious. The impression lasted all her life, and in *Villette* it haunted her again with recurrent horror” (Gerin, 286).

The second fear is also in the nightmare, as Lucy feels that the dream has brought her face to face with death. Like all those children in the juvenilia, she has reached the edge of death and has been rescued from it (by the abrupt ending of the dream) just in time: “...that dream remained scarce fifteen minutes—a brief space, but sufficing to wring my whole frame with unknown anguish; to confer a nameless experience that had the hue, the mien, the terror, the very tone of a visitation from eternity” (151). Finally Lucy
cannot stand the pension anymore; to live inside this
pension/psyche is to face a living death: the empty beds
where she sleeps had become “spectres” (152), “death’s heads”
(152), the house was suffocating her, the “house-roof” as
“crushing as the slab of a tomb” (152). She tries to escape
her subconscious by escaping the pension, and fleeing to Père
Silas (the “father” (153) who eventually delivers her to Dr.
John). But the revolt of her subconscious is too strong, and
Lucy, trapped in another wild storm, lost in the tangled maze
of her mind, “narrow streets of picturesque, ancient, and
mouldering houses,” (155) finally gives in to the storm: “I
bent my head to meet it, but it beat me back. My heart did
not fail at all in this conflict; I only wished that I had
wings and could ascend the gale, spread and repose my pinions
on its strength, career in its course, sweep where it swept”
(155). In following the wild storm, she loses consciousness,
and almost loses her life.

“Madame, where am I?”

“In a very safe asylum, well protected for the
present; make your mind quite easy until you get
a little better, you look ill this morning” (163).

When Lucy awakens from her mental breakdown, she finds
herself in that oasis of normality and reasonableness, the
Bretton home, which is for her a “safe asylum” (163), a “cave
in the sea” (173). Section Two of Villette focuses on the
suppression of Lucy’s awakening in favor of “normal”
behavior, which earns her affection from women and from men.
Lucy returns from near-death; Dr. John says upon finding Lucy that she is “perfectly unconscious, perfectly bloodless, and nearly cold” (176). Upon awakening, she finds herself in a lacy, feminine paradise, a place that seems like an indoor garden: “a carpet where arabesques of bright blue relieved a ground of shaded fawn; pale walls over which a slight but endless garland of azure forget-me-nots ran mazed and bewildered amongst myriad gold leaves and tendrils” (158). Brontë’s juvenilia are filled with stories of characters who are as magically rescued from places of horror and death by genii, who carry them to safe harbor. Perhaps the most typical of these stories is “The Adventures of Mon Edouard de Crack,” in which a young man is magically rescued from a Parisian torture chamber and brought to a flowering garden in Angria. The tale ends with Edouard given permanent asylum in Angria by the magical land’s prince, the Marquis of Douro (Alexander, Edition 133-140). Like Edouard, Lucy is rescued from a horrible, deadly place and given asylum by Bretton’s fairy prince, Dr. John. He offers Lucy temporary refuge, affection, and a promise of a new life, if she ignores her horrible memories, suppresses her odd desires, and stays constantly with the company of others. The ghost, he says, is only a “spectral illusion” (239), the mental breakdown was caused by a “nervous fever” (171).

It is erroneous to think of Lucy’s ever making a conscious effort to confront her past. Lucy never chooses to relive any horrible memory; her main desire has always been
suppression: "in catalepsy and a dead trance, I studiously held the quick of my nature" (102), and her coping mechanisms (invisibility, silence, complete passivity) are designed to suppress memory and spare her any further pain. When Lucy describes her breakdown to Dr. John, it is clear that she feels no control over that experience; it is like a separate force ripping her apart from the inside: "a cruel sense of desolation pained my mind: a feeling that would make its way, rush out, or kill me--like... the current which passes through the heart, and which, if aneurism or any other morbid cause obstructs its natural channels, seeks abnormal outlet" (176).

Lucy makes it clear that there is no connection between her rational mind and rebellious body. Lucy is terrified of her body, her desires, and her secret memories, and shuts off her mind from her body as often as possible, which is one reason why every look in the mirror is a new shock. Lucy wants to be a disembodied mind. This is made especially clear as she awakens after a long fight between her "spirit" and "substance," the spirit hating a return to its body: "But the faculties soon settled each in its place; the life-machine presently resumed its wonted and regular working" (157). Her body is not hers but the "life-machine" (157), and its working or not working depend on forces outside her control. Just as the fall into "madness" was an unwanted horror, the escape out of it is an involuntary, but welcome, miracle.
But with the fall into madness, it is clear that the old system will not work. Lucy cannot be again be successful at suppression on her own; she needs new defenses. Besides, she can no longer be invisible if Mrs. Bretton recognizes her as one of her own, and she can no longer hide, if, as the patient, she is the center of attention. She does therefore what the children of the juvenilia do when endangered: wait for the father to rescue them. Just as in the juvenilia, men in Villette are all-powerful; they know best; even the wily Madame Beck, for example, can be stilled with one curt word from M. Paul. And though Dr. John may not be the great all-knowing father-figure that the Duke of Wellington was, he is the “expert” at mental health, and he is powerful enough to command; as Mrs. Bretton says to Lucy: “I can assure you my son is master and must be obeyed” (171). Giving in to Dr. John seems no hardship for Lucy; in fact, she is greatly relieved: she can now turn from a desperate woman into a little child and, if obedient, receive all the affection the “independent” woman did not.

And what does “obeying” (171) Graham Bretton mean? First, it means creating an active and positive facade, directing one’s energy towards the outside world. As Lucy says at this point: “it is on the surface only the common gaze will fall. As to what lies below, leave that with God” (170). Dr. John tries to heal Lucy with “cheerful society” (175), taking her constantly to plays, concerts, and art galleries. And Lucy in return studies the surfaces of women:
how women behave in public, what she would need to do with her body were she solid and visible. Lucy has always observed other women, but during her recovery her observation becomes intense: she studies the Labassecourean women at concerts, the painting of the voluptuous "Cleopatra" (191), the queen, and Ginevra. She listens carefully to all of Graham's male insights on women, and glosses over his hypocrisies: Graham, for example, sees nothing wrong with Ginevra accepting his "ornaments" (184), but condemns her as a whore when he sees her wearing the bracelet of his rival (209). A patient student, Lucy is batted back and forth by the madonna/whore images she sees around her, but she perseveres. An obedient woman is smiled upon by Dr. John; a "cheerful" (209) woman (like Mrs. Bretton) enjoys his companionship. And like the young Jane Eyre, Lucy will now do almost anything to maintain her new mentor's approval and love.

Secondly, Lucy "obeys" (171) Dr. John Bretton by shutting down her inner voices. Symbolically, this occurs when Lucy first sights the "nun in the attic" (235), something that terrifies her so much that all her inner devices fall apart, and she runs screaming to Madame Beck. The nun, like the cretin, is silenced, just as the memory (and abused child) was silenced; her face "bandaged" (235) with a "white cloth over her face" (241), she cannot speak but can only see, looking at Lucy with "cold, fixed" and "glittering" (241) eyes. The nun appears just as Lucy
is reading her first letter from Dr. John, an appropriate moment since the silenced (the buried memory) is pitted against the silencer (the good doctor/father/lover). I will "keep away the nun," (243) (Dr. John will say), and his protection will be to keep Lucy out of the nun's presence (and under his own influence) as much as possible. Dr. John starts this plan of attack immediately upon hearing of the nun (he is in Madame Beck's room when Lucy arrives). He first blackmails her into divulging the secret, jokingly threatening to take his letter back if she will not confess: "I will again take away that single epistle; being mine, I think I have a right to reclaim it" (238). Once she has revealed the truth, he proceeds to redefine her experience: it happened, he says, not in reality, but through the fever of her own mind; it was an "illusion" (240), a passing hysteria. The diagnosis makes Lucy question her own sanity: "Oh Dr. John--I shudder at the thought of being liable to such an illusion! It seemed so real. Is there no cure?--no preventive?" (239-40).

There are two explanations for Dr. John's diagnosis. The first is that this scene is very similar to the classic child/parent scene after incest: the child tells a parent/authority figure of the abuse, and the adult tells the child that the event never occurred; it was all a figment of the child's imagination. The child, now suspicious of her own sanity, or afraid someone else will define her as insane,
chooses to remain silent (Bass 92-3). In Lucy’s case, the
decision to keep silent is made even before speaking to Dr.
John; nobody, she says, will believe her story, especially
not Madame Beck, who would disparage her and call her tale
one of “romance and unreality” (241-42). Lucy tells Dr. John
that she will not tell anyone else her story, since the
result would be so negative: “I shall be discredited and
accused of dreaming” (238).

Even if we interpret Lucy’s “nun” (241) as a real
figment of her imagination, it still seems clear that Dr.
John’s main concern is to ignore the troubling thought. His
advice to Lucy is to maintain a “cheerful mind” (240), and
keep away from the attic, a place, he says, Lucy “never
ought to enter” (239). By never entering the attic
(symbolically, that region of her mind), and by spending her
free time in “cheerful” (240) company, the troubling visions
should vanish.

The reappearance of Lucy’s “double” (266) Polly, takes
place on one of these cheerful excursions: a performance to
which Lucy is escorted by Dr. John to see the great dramatic
actress, Vashti. It is here, where Lucy, John, and Polly are
united, that Vashti begins to vent her rage:

Behold! I found upon her something neither of woman
nor of man; in each of her eyes sat a devil. These
evil forces bore her through the tragedy, kept up
her feeble strength—for she was but a frail creature;
and as the action rose and the stir deepened, how
wildly they shook her with their passions of the pit!
They wrote HELL on her straight, haughty brow. They
tuned her voice to the note of torment. They writhed
her regal face to a demoniac mask. Hate and Murder and Madness incarnate, she stood (247).

Vashti’s wild performance and dying breaths mesmerize Lucy, but merely amuse Dr. John. The performance is immediately interrupted by a fire (seemingly linked to Vashti’s performance), which suddenly sweeps through the theatre and causes chaos.

The way a woman’s rage is described here is quite fascinating. Here is what Lucy is trying so desperately to subdue: the feeling of violation, the helpless rage against an enemy that can only be defied but not overcome. Vashti openly fights her opponent; declares war on it: “I have said that she does not resent her grief. No; the weakness of that word would make it a lie. To her, what hurts becomes immediately embodied: she looks on it as a thing is that can be attacked, worried down, torn in shreds” (247). And yet the battle is doomed from the start, the woman is too weak to fight, the enemy has already burrowed into her body and has started to consume her: “a queen, fair as the day once, turned pale now like twilight, and wasted like wax in flame” (246).

The description works to subvert the thing it seeks to admire: Vashti, by letting in rage, has opened the door to the devil’s forces: “Vashti torn by seven devils: devils which cried sore and rent the tenement they haunted, but still refused to be exorcized” (247). Rage makes one evil, perhaps mad; without strict “surveillance” the rage will
overcome a woman and make her lose whatever self-control she has left. Like the wild Ashantees in the juvenilia, who had to be instantly subdued before the heroes could establish a fortress (a self), rage must be conquered because it is ultimately much more powerful than the rest of the self. Once it escapes, it will envelop a woman and turn her into a Bertha Mason, a demon. There will be nothing left of the “real” woman; the devil will have taken over the self, and the woman, like Vashti, will be shunted aside to make room for the demon: “Behold! I found upon her something neither of woman nor of man: in each of her eyes sat a devil” (247).
Lucy is fascinated with Vashti because she is watching a woman giving in to rage and paying the price; Vashti is transforming into a demon before her eyes: “She could shine with pale grandeur and steady might; but that star verged already on its judgment-day. Seen near, it was a chaos-hollow, half-consumed; an orb perished or perishing--half lava, half glow” (246).

The other way the “marvelous” Vashti is subverted is through her sexuality. Wild, enraged women are branded as whores by the same father-figures whom Lucy is so desperately trying to please. John Graham can easily trivialize Vashti (as he does Ginevra and the painting of Cleopatra) because the same characteristics that make her powerful make her (in the male mind) impure, crass, and sexual. Like the original Brontë sexual hellion, Zenobia Ellrington, the two images of
the sexual woman (Vashti and the Cleopatra) share the classic Brontë traits: Vashti in the hellion’s spiritual nature (her fury and defiance), and the Cleopatra in her physical appearance (a voluptuous, meaty woman, “half-dressed”, lounging on a couch—the object of male lust (191)). Dr. John’s condemnation of women like this is quick and permanent (it only took a few moments for him to judge Ginevra), and his judgment of Vashti is duly noted by Lucy:

Looking at his face, I longed to know his exact opinions, and at last I put a question tending to elicit them....”How did he like Vashti?” I wished to know....”Hm-m-m,“ was the first scarce articulate but expressive answer; and then such a strange smile went wandering round his lips, a smile so critical, so almost callous! I suppose that for natures of that order his sympathies were callous. In a few terse phrases he told me his opinion of, and feeling towards, the actress: he judged her as a woman, not an artist; it was a branding judgment (249).

Finally, Vashti, for all the similarities to other mad/women in Brontë novels, is not a very powerful presence in Villette. Vashti’s expression of rage is a staged performance, at a safe distance from those men she rails against and the women she affects. The fact also that it is a performance lessens its effect (Rochester is physically threatened by his wife at all times, but Dr. John can remain “curious” (249) but distanced at Vashti’s performance). Lucy Snowe may be affected by Vashti, but she has no real connection to her. In Jane Eyre, Jane is pitted against Bertha Mason for Rochester; in Villette Lucy is pitted against Polly Home in a battle for Dr. John’s affection. Rage is the emotion from which Lucy is the most distanced.
And Dr. John helps Lucy to keep her distance. When the fire from the theatre creates chaos, Dr. John helps both Lucy and Polly escape, carrying Polly in his arms, and holding on to Lucy’s hand (251). Dr. John rescues them both from the fire, and symbolically, from the destructive wrath of this woman’s rage. With him they have no need to confront either the rage of Vashti or the rage inside themselves.

What occurs next is the strangest romance in *Villette*: a sort of pseudo-pornographic tale, where Lucy voyeuristically watches her double earn the sexual interest of the man she secretly wants for herself. On the surface, the situation seems quite normal: Polly and her father accidentally meet up with John Bretton at Vashti’s performance, and the Bretton and Home families (together with Lucy) become reacquainted. But underlying these social gatherings are the meetings of John, Lucy and Polly, where seemingly innocent relationships become highly sexualized.

At the center of this love triangle is Dr. John, all-powerful, all-knowing, and described by his mother teasingly as a Turkish sultan. While he is sleeping, his mother dresses him in the sultan’s turban he won at a raffle and is very pleased at the result: “when I put my large Cashmere about him, there was as fine a young bey, dey, or pacha improvised as you would wish to see” (261).

The central love interest in his harem is little Polly Home, all grown up now at seventeen, who serves both as a romantic interest for John Graham and as a double for Lucy
Snowe. Polly represents all that Lucy is and all that Lucy can never be. For Polly is both Lucy (at her most father-adoring) and the perfect male fantasy.

Brontë first makes it clear that Lucy is approaching a reflection of herself when she recognizes the adult Polly for the first time. Coming into what she calls her “own little sea-green room” (263), the room she stayed in during her recovery, she sees not her own face but Polly’s reflection in the mirror:

between the candles, and before the glass, appeared something dressing itself—an airy, fairy thing—small, slight, white—a winter spirit (263)

The “fairy thing” (263) is the opposite of Lucy: mysterious where she is dull, “light” and “airy” (263) where she is plodding, yet it shares the same memories: “The child of seven years lives in the girl of seventeen” (265) Polly says. And besides sharing memory, both women have a similar way of perceiving the world --their rapport is uncanny. For the first time, Lucy feels as if she is meeting a reflection of herself:

I thought the same, but I wondered to find my thoughts hers: there are certain things in which we so rarely meet with our double that it seems a miracle when that chance befals (266).

One of the first things that Lucy recognizes when waking up from her mental breakdown is the pincushion she had made for Mrs. Bretton: “a pin-cushion made of crimson satin, ornamented with gold beads and frilled with thread lace” (161). That ornament is a good description of Polly, who
shares the sexual memory, the “crimson” that haunts Vashti’s stage and reflects the blood Polly spills when “sewing” for her father. The “gold beads” and “lace” (161) represent Polly’s aura of airy femininity and comfortable wealth, her new-found inheritance, the frills that decorate Polly’s flouncy white gowns, and all the rooms she sleeps in. Polly carries an aura of feminine softness with her, which is represented, for example, in this description of her hotel bedroom: “The chamber was a room shadowy with pale-blue hangings, vaporous with curtainings and veilings of muslin; the bed seemed to me like a snow-drift and mist—spotless, soft, and gauzy” (252-3).

But Polly would have no superiority over Lucy or attraction for John Graham if she were just feminine or wealthy--Graham has scoffed at Ginerva and the women of Labassecour at the concert who all share at least some of these attributes. Polly can attract Graham (where Lucy cannot) because she is a child/woman. She straddles the boundary between small, helpless child and grown woman, and is marked with sexual knowledge combined with the innocence of a child. Six-year-old Polly carried around a blood-splattered handkerchief she would give to her father; now at seventeen, she wears a pure-white dress covered with crimson spots: “It wore white, sprinkled slightly with drops of scarlet; its girdle was red” (263).
Her body reflects this child/woman dichotomy. When Lucy undresses Polly after she is injured in the concert, she notices Polly’s delicate womanly proportions, her mass of blond hair and creamy, fragile skin: “The girl was herself a small, delicate creature, but made like a model” (253). But this “woman” has the “solemn eyes of some pretty, wondering child” (253), a voice that still speaks in a childish lisp (276), and a body so light that Dr. John has no idea how old she is when he picks her up to rescue her from the fire: “She is very light,” said Graham, “like a child!” and he asked in my ear, “Is she a child, Lucy? Did you notice her age?” (251) And Polly’s father, delighted at his daughter’s energetic attempts to serve him, has perhaps the most accurate comment on Polly’s nature, when he says to Graham: “Don’t you find her pretty nearly as much the child as she was ten years ago?” (268).

Graham shows this is true, as he immediately picks up his sexual horseplay with Polly. The difference is simply one of degree. When Polly was a child, his surprise attacks were designed to tease and destabilize her; they showed her how useless her dignity was against his greater strength. He was offering his affection for her compliance in serving his needs. Now, as both are adults, his play is far more serious, as he is offering not just affection but sex. In this scene, for example, Graham is offering Polly a sip of his ale:
"I should like a little," said Paulina, looking up;  
"I never had any 'old October:' is it sweet?"

"Perilously sweet," said Graham.

She continued to look up exactly with the 
countenance of a child that longs for some 
prohibited dainty. At last the Doctor relented, 
took it down, and indulged himself in the 
gratification of letting her taste from his hand; 
his eyes always expressive in the revelation of 
pleasurable feelings, luminously and smilingly 
avowed that it was a gratification; and he prolonged 
it by so regulating the position of the cup that only 
a drop at a time could reach the rosy, sipping lips by 
which its brim was courted.

"A little more—a little more," said she, petulantly 
touching his hand with her forefinger, to make him 
incline the cup more generously and yieldingly. "It 
smells of spice and sugar, but I can't taste it; your 
wrists is so stiff, and you are so stingy."

He indulged her, whispering, however, with gravity: 
"don't tell my mother or Lucy; they wouldn't approve" 
(270-1).

Polly decides finally after tasting the "forbidden" 
drink that it is "disagreeable," too "bitter and hot," and as 
she did as a child, runs back to her father for protection 
(270-1).

Polly has learned what all the children in the juvenilia 
learn: perfect compliance with the father leads to 
protection. The Marquis of Douro for example is known 
especially for his great respect and obedience for his 
father, and in exchange, is rescued constantly from all his 
run-ins with evil geniis. Here Polly, as a violated child, 
has perfected compliance to an art form: the less 
she recalls the violation, the more innocent she seems, and 
the more attractive she is to the father/lover. If she 
"remembers all" (265), as she tells Lucy, her father would be
the last to know it: "It may be well for papa to look on me as a baby: I rather prefer he should view me thus" (292). As a version of what Florence Rush calls the "carnal child" (Rush, 35), Polly is sexually attractive to men because of her suppressed sin (the spots of red on her dress) combined with her complete lack of rage and aura of sexual innocence. Here, for example, is one of the first glances that Polly gives Graham: "he took away with him a parting look--shy, but very soft--as beautiful, as innocent, as any little fawn could lift out of its cover of fern, or any lamb from its meadow-bed" (277).

Added to all this charm is the constant attention Polly showers on men, feeding her father jam and rolls (as she did Graham), making sure he is warm, listening eagerly to his every word. Her enthusiasm is well praised by her father, who also admits he has trained her this way: "...Polly showed her sense in catering for a friend's material comforts: it was I who put her into the way of such good manners--nor do I let her forget them. Polly, offer me a small slice of that tongue" (272).

And what does Polly get in return for all this compliance? She receives what both she and Lucy are desperate for: male attention and love. The world outside the Bretton home, that "cave in the sea" (173), is harsh and barren; shut in the house, Lucy watches it from the windows: "The sky, relieved of its avalanche, lay naked and pale: through the barren boughs of the avenue we could see it well,
and not also the polar splendour of the near-year moon—an orb, white as a world of ice" (279). To be able to gain love and attention from not one but two men, when the alternative is the hell of being left alone, seems to both characters very much worth compliance. Polly’s only problem, once she has gained Graham’s love, is to convince her father to share her with another man; that done (amid much pleading) the “despotist” (414) father agrees and Polly accepts both men willingly: “Papa, I love you both....I can take care of you both” (417). The last scene of Polly is a repeat of a much earlier scene, where she is placed on a high chair sewing between her father and Graham. Here, in a park, she sits between them again, creating something that will unify all three:

Paulina sat between the two gentlemen; while they conversed, her little hands were busy at some work; I thought at first she was binding a nosegay. No; with the tiny pair of scissors, glittering in her lap, she had severed spoils from each manly head beside her, and was now occupied in plaiting together the gray lock and the golden wave. The plait woven—no silk-thread being at hand to bind it—a tress of her own hair was made to serve that purpose; she tied it like a knot, imprisoned it in a locket, and laid it on her heart.

“Now,” said she, “there is an amulet made, which has virtue to keep you two always friends. You can never quarrel so long as I wear this” (418).

While Polly is developing this intimate relationship with John Graham, and making peace between her father and lover, Lucy Snowe is involved in a love story that dominates the last section of the narrative. The romance between Lucy and M. Paul (which takes up the last third of the novel)
reflects Brontë’s uncertainty in choosing either female or male mastery for her heroine. As Diane Sadoff states: Brontë “seeks to redefine the terms of mastery, to invert male and female, always finding subversion and female mastery at the last minute too risky for completion” (120). Brontë for example sets up the courtship between Lucy and M. Paul in the usual master-slave formula, and then ridicules the master; she creates her most self-censoring, “puritan” Romantic hero, and then infuses his actions with a symbolic sexuality. The result is a power dynamic which shifts constantly between male and female all the way up to the deliberately ambiguous ending.

M. Paul, it can be argued, is not a Romantic hero at all, but a parody of one: a “little” (212) man smoking his cigar and strutting like Rochester, he makes a mockery not only of himself, but of every preening Romantic hero Brontë created before him. In his hands, Rochester’s wild rages become “the ravings of a third-rate London actor” (351); his “terrible gaze” (311) easily vanquished when his glasses are smashed. M. Paul’s cry to Lucy: “You are resolved to have me quite blind and helpless in your hands!” (314) is fun at the expense of Jane Eyre (Shapiro 1).

But M. Paul is not just a parody of a Byronic hero, he is also an inadequate version of one. Just as Lucy is too flawed to be a noble beauty like Mary Percy or Polly Home, M. Paul lacks the essential qualities to be a “real” man in Brontë’s world of Byronic heros: he has no wealth (he is
“destitute”); he lacks the physical prowess, the height, and the sexual experience to be much of a sexual threat. In fact his ragings and public posturing cover up an inadequate man (and in a world where the phallus is a tower, like Brocklehurst, or Zamorna, a castrated man); he must hide behind his posturing the way the child Raton in the juvenilia disguises himself in adult clothes.

M. Paul is also less of a “real man” (and therefore less of a sexual threat to Lucy) because he is more connected to the female (to Lucy) than anyone else: he is, he says, Lucy’s double: “...we are alike--there is affinity. Do you see it, mademoiselle, when you look in the glass? Do you observe that your forehead is shaped like mine--that your eyes are cut like mine? Do you hear that you have some of my tones of voice? Do you know that you have many of my looks?” (352) Unlike the strict gender roles followed by Polly Home and Graham Bretton (which reflect back to the Angrian Mary Percy and Zamorna), Lucy and Paul merge into an androgynous whole: they both share a “dead past” that overwhelms them: Lucy, her hidden secret, Paul, his commitment to the long-dead Justine Marie, and the “family junta” that grasps onto him (as Lucy sees it) by manipulating his misguided faith and family loyalty. Like Lucy, Paul has vowed to stay with the memory of the dead (Justine Marie) rather than the living, and has remained voluntarily celibate: censoring himself (and Lucy) from sexuality (ripping pages out of her books, checking the color and modesty of her dresses), and joining
Lucy in her celibate order: calling himself a “Jesuit,” a “priest” (377), and Lucy a “sister” (368).

In the ways that Paul doubles for Lucy (in his celibacy, and “helpful” censorship of her sexuality), he represents the “fantasy lover,” who can give her intimacy without the threat of sexuality. The lack of open sexuality in their courtship balances the power relationship between them, since in most of Brontë’s romances, the man achieves mastery through his dominating (and often threatening) sexuality (for example, Rochester’s flirtations with Jane, or Zamorna’s powerful attraction for Caroline Vernon).

There is not the same uneven power dynamic in Villette as there was between Rochester and Jane in Jane Eyre, mainly because the “master” in Villette has given up his own sexuality, castrating himself. But if that is true, why is it necessary for Brontë to kill Paul Emmanuel at the end of Villette? Paul Emmanuel must disappear from the text, because his presence, though muted, symbolically projects the male mastery and sexuality that could engulf (and perhaps destroy) Lucy. Though M. Paul may not be overtly sexual, he still has the male “gaze,” and he still behaves (like Crimsworth) as the voyeur, who secretly gazes at (and metaphorically penetrates) the exposed women he sees in the garden. As Sadoff says of Brontë’s male gaze: “For the male...the figure of the gaze assures the gazer of female castration and male possession of the phallus: he has the phallus, she lacks it. The male gaze eroticizes, represents,
and empowers the phallus” (128). M. Paul’s actions also symbolically portray penetration: when he barges into the women’s reading room, for example, the “two-leaved door split (as split it did for his admission—such a slow word as “open” is insufficient to describe his movements)” (314). He is also always in her private places, her desk, for example, where Lucy says, “that hand of M. Emmanuel’s was on intimate terms” (333), and he is constantly peering at her as she weeps, or locking her up with him alone in uncomfortable spaces.

But this underlying sexual stalking does not affect Lucy as much as Paul’s desire for her as a woman, to which she responds with gratitude and contentment. Throughout the novel her interest (and respect) in him grows as she develops a broader knowledge of his nature: after a visit to Malevola he becomes her “Christian hero,” then, after his “present” of a school, her “king.” The desire to “submit” to a master (to give away personal power, as the “little queen” did for the Duke of Wellington), is too strong to resist, and Lucy by the end of the novel has happily slipped into the position of grateful subordinate: “...royal for me had been that hand’s bounty; to offer homage was both a joy and a duty” (466). The fountain Lucy sees on her walk back to the Pension with Paul Emmanuel represents both their sexual union and Lucy’s desire to give in to male mastery: “In a large garden near us, a jet rose from a well, and a pale statue leaned over the play of waters” (467).
Sexual submission, however, does not become a possibility for Lucy, as Brontë ends the novel with M. Paul’s death. According to Gerin, Charlotte Brontë had planned Monsieur Paul’s death early in her writing of *Villette*; it was only her father’s pleading that made her compromise on a veiled ending (511). Gerin argues that the reason for his death was due to Charlotte Brontë’s pessimism at the time of writing, her belief that a character like Lucy (or perhaps like herself) could not realistically expect the joy of romantic love (Gerin 511). But the ending may also reflect Charlotte Brontë’s unsettled conflict over male mastery, as Lucy Snowe’s desire to give up autonomy for her master/lover is encouraged up to the the very end of the novel, where the death of the master leaves Lucy “loveless,” but “free” from male mastery.
CONCLUSION

What purpose did the juvenilia have for Charlotte Brontë? And why, as literary scholars, should we be interested in it? The major scholars of the juvenilia, Fannie Ratchford and Christine Alexander, both argue that the juvenilia serve as a literary apprenticeship for Brontë, and in that way is stylistically and thematically relevant. And now, as the whole of the juvenilia are becoming more easily accessible, literary critics are finding more information in it: the origins of Charlotte Brontë’s motivations for writing, and the genesis of the psychoanalytical conflicts in her novels (for example, the sadomasochistic element of Brontë’s romances). This dissertation is one of the first psychoanalytic readings of Charlotte Brontë’s juvenilia and one of the first to explore the themes of violence and abuse which dominate these early manuscripts, and run throughout all of her work.

My analysis of the early juvenilia reveals that Brontë was using her early writing to cope (perhaps subconsciously) with the trauma of her sisters’ deaths at Cowan Bridge School. The fantasy stories she wrote between 1829 and 1832, four years after the tragedy, are mainly different versions
of the same story: a child (or adult) is swept up into chaos, and brought to the edge of death, only to be saved at the last minute by some all-powerful father/figure, usually the Duke of Wellington, or in the earliest stories, the four great Genii, who represent the Brontë children themselves. In a world in which death doesn’t exist (though always threatens), the child/characters play with death: sneaking into attics to play with skeletons, or staying up all night to watch ghosts appear and disappear. The extended fantasy-stories, which gradually build into the world of Glasstown, allow Charlotte to explore the terrors of death which she was unable to confront in her everyday life.

These fantasies also become the testing ground for Brontë’s use of metaphor—the symbolic language which will later establish itself as the ghosts, dreams, and odd paintings in Jane Eyre and Villette. Almost immediately Charlotte begins creating landscapes in her writing that mimic the psyche: the exposed plain and fortress that represent the beginning of Glasstown (and the need for protection/repression in the face of great trauma); the fantasy world of Glasstown, whose natural landscape becomes associated with the female, and whose city, shaped like female genitalia, symbolizes a place of rescue, an escape from the real world of death. Lording over this female world is the Duke of Wellington, who represents not only the father, but repression and self-control. He is the master suppressor, repressing all his own emotion, and quashing any
rebellion in Glasstown, the original “man of ice,” the prototype for St. John Rivers and John Graham Bretton. Thus the characteristics of Brontë’s writing: the use of metaphor, the theme of repression or “reason,” and the man of “ice,” were already being established as Brontë began writing at the age of thirteen.

As Brontë continued to write as a young woman, the stories became steeped in sexuality, and the violence in the stories, which once centered on the physical abuse of children, now focused on sexual abuse. In Brontë’s novelettes (1836 - 1839), female characters are systematically violated and raped. The once female world of nature becomes a male world of pillars and halls, in which women are represented as marble statues, helpless in the face of male lust. Gender, once a non-issue in the juvenilia (where mothers were mostly nonexistent and females were few), becomes central to Brontë’s novelettes. Her new world of Angria exaggerates and codifies the division between male and female: the men are characterized by their masculine power, their “phallic” size and strength; the women are described as childlike, tiny, creatures trapped like prisoners in male domains, unable (and often unwilling) to protect themselves from violation. Though the Byronic influence is obvious, the emphasis is not on male lust but on female violation, and on the impossibility of escape, either because of a masochistic need for the lover (who often also represents the father), or because of a woman’s own physical frailty. Female rebellion,
rage, is easily subdued by male mastery. The only “escape” from Brontë’s new world is deliberate celibacy and separation from men, for example, Elizabeth Hasting’s practice in *Henry Hastings*, and later Jane Eyre’s escape from Rochester.

Charlotte Brontë’s adult novels (*Jane Eyre* and *Villette*) are much more sophisticated than the juvenilia in their symbolism, structure, and depth. But the themes of abuse and rape which had their origins in her earliest writings are continued: both *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* center on abused women, and both focus on the ways the heroines survive their abuse. Jane Eyre is able to survive emotional and physical abuse at Gateshead and physical neglect at Lowood because of her anger, which allows her to undercut the hypocrisy of her abusers and speak the “truth,” thus avoiding the passivity, and eventual self-hatred which destroy Helen Burns. But Jane must learn to modify that anger, since she is threatened throughout the novel with the possibility of madness, resulting from excessive rage (the madwoman), or lack of self control (her own experience in the red room). Her journey to emotional wholeness is a tightrope walk, in which strict self-control is the only protection from madness or sexual abandonment, the same self-control which is depicted in the fortresses and personality of the Duke/Father/Protector of the early juvenilia.

Finally there is *Villette*, the darkest, and as Robert Heilman says, the “most Gothic” (*New Gothic* 130) of Brontë’s four novels. *Jane Eyre* is a fantasy compared to this novel;
in *Jane Eyre*, the heroine survives trauma and eventually reunites with her lover; in *Villette*, Lucy Snowe never completely confronts her trauma and is permanently scarred and imprisoned by it. The “trauma,” though never clearly stated, is arguably sexual abuse, and the journey Lucy takes in this novel is a regressive one, facing the memory of abuse during her “nervous breakdown,” and then running from it. *Villette* recalls the incest and sexual abuse of the later juvenilia: the “incestuous” relationship between Polly and her father; the courtship between the “childlike” Polly and her lover, John Graham Bretton.

The old landscape metaphors are now fully developed in the form of houses, which symbolically represent emotional health (the Bretton’s light, airy home), and sexual guilt and memory (the dark, secretive garden and attic in Madame Beck’s pension). Finally, there is the unresolved issue of male mastery and female submission (or rebellion), a theme which Brontë begins in the Byronic romances of the early juvenilia and never completely resolves. Certainly it is not resolved in *Villette*, which contains the most sexual sadism of Brontë’s four novels. Monsieur Paul is no Zamorna; he is celibate, often silly, yet also not completely “unmanned” (*Shirley* 542): he still has the Brontë “gaze” and the power of emotional mastery over Lucy Snowe. Even though Monsieur Paul is the most feminine of Brontë’s male heroes, he receives the worst fate: the ending of *Villette*, as Heilman says, is the only time Brontë kills her male hero (*New Gothic*
The ending of *Villette* makes it clear that Brontë had not consciously resolved her own inner conflict between the desire for male dominance and protection, (which leads for example, to the marriage between Shirley and Louis in *Shirley*), and the rage against that dominance, which appears so often in Brontë's novels: the madwoman in *Jane Eyre*, for example, or as Dianne Sadoff notes, Brontë's pattern of symbolically castrating the male hero (2), either by weakening him physically (Edward Rochester, Robert Moore) or erasing him completely (Monsieur Paul).

This unresolved conflict between female submission and rebellion could partly stem from the unconscious in Brontë's writing, the sense that she was writing rebelliously on both a conscious level (the speeches against female bondage by Jane Eyre and Shirley Keelder), and the unconscious level in the metaphoric landscapes, dreams, paintings, and textual hints (like the red spots on Polly Home's dress) which speak of female violation, entrapment, fear of madness, and uncontrolled rage. If my analysis holds true, the patterns of violation and fear that begin when Brontë was thirteen and continue to her last, greatest novel mark the unresolved conflicts of the "unconscious" writer, the "trancelike" (Gerin, *Novelettes* 33) writer who undercuts her narrative with ideas which lead the reader to even more disturbing thoughts than what her often "rebellious" heroines state openly. This theory of Brontë as not fully conscious of all she was saying is arguable; the "trancelike" way she writes,
many argue, is an overly romantic view of a great writer. Yet, if biography is accurate, the woman Mrs. Gaskell describes, the woman who attacked Mr. Thackeray for his "immoral" writing and faithfully devoted herself to a difficult father, would perhaps be shocked at the analysis of incest in her own works. And a study of her earliest juvenilia shows a pattern of a writer using fantasy as a way of exploring the forbidden, resolving (perhaps subconsciously) issues of traumatic death, and emotional and sexual violation—issues which the dutiful daughter and Victorian woman could not admit openly to others, or perhaps, even to herself.

This dissertation is a beginning, one of the first explorations of an area in Brontë scholarship which has not received much attention. Further psychoanalytic study of the juvenilia could perhaps yield more unconscious conflicts in the early writing, and that study, linked to her later novels, may help critics to understand the genesis and development of conflicts which have remained unresolved in Brontë's work.
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