CHARLOTTE BRONTË'S RESPONSE TO JANE AUSTEN

by

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(Under the Direction of Roxanne Eberle)

ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the relationship between the writings of Charlotte Brontë and Jane Austen. Even though Brontë's letters excoriate Austen's novels, she appropriates and transforms many of Austen's themes in her own novels, such as the attitude toward nature, women's roles in society, and the role of society in limiting women's sexual choice.

INDEX WORDS: Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma*, Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, *Shirley*, *Villette*

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INTRODUCTION

There are few authors as inescapable as Jane Austen and Charlotte Brontë. *Pride and Prejudice* and *Jane Eyre*, especially, continue to dominate our cultural imagination over one hundred fifty years since their first publications. The number of recent film adaptations alone attests to the strength of their influence on popular culture. Literary critics are also fascinated by these two authors. For example, Karl Kroeber's book on nineteenth century stylistics focuses on Austen, Brontë, and George Eliot, as do books about the condition of women in nineteenth century society by Susan Siefert, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, and Susan Fraiman.

Mark Kinkead-Weekes and Kathryn Sutherland explore Brontë's criticisms of Austen more completely. Kinkead-Weekes argues that Austen would have agreed with Brontë's detractions, and that the progress of Austen's style (from *Pride and Prejudice* to *Mansfield Park*, from *Mansfield Park* to *Emma*, and from *Emma* to *Persuasion*) reveals the influence of criticisms similar to Brontë's. Sutherland argues that despite Brontë's criticism of Austen, *Jane Eyre* demonstrates the influence of *Mansfield Park* in its treatment of history as a social construct threatened by the revolutions in gender, class, and race of the early nineteenth century. Both of these critics assume that Brontë was speaking in her own voice in her letters, not as a character constructed for the benefit of her public. Both also focus their arguments for what they perceive to be Brontë's injustice to Austen on an analysis of *Mansfield Park*—an odd choice, because there is no evidence that Brontë ever read (or even heard of) *Mansfield Park*. Her letters only prove that she read *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma*. Even though Harriet Martineau recommended *Persuasion* to her as Austen's best novel, and Brontë received *Sense and*

Sensibility from her publisher at the same time she received *Emma*, there is no evidence that she read them (Brontë 349, 361).

Virginia Woolf remains the standard in Austen-Brontë criticism eighty years later. In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf praises Austen for remaining true to her art, while condemning Brontë for allowing her own emotional life to intrude on her fiction writing. She argues that Austen "devised a perfectly natural, shapely sentence proper for her own use and never departed from it. Thus, with less genius for writing than Charlotte Brontë, she got infinitely more said" (77). In contrast, Woolf claims that Brontë's "books will be deformed and twisted. She will write in a rage where she should write calmly. […] She will write of herself where she should write of her characters. She is at war with her lot" (69-70). Because of this obsession with self, "she will never get her genius expressed whole and entire" (69). According to Woolf, Brontë is too obsessed with the injustice of her lot in life to express herself adequately in her novels, while Austen is unhampered by any sense of personal presence in her novels. Woolf argues that this purity makes Austen's art superior to Brontë's; in her letters, however, Woolf admitted to preferring Brontë's passion to Austen's perfection. She writes to her friend Ethel Smyth that Austen "is not by any means one of my favourites. I'd give all she ever wrote for half of what the Brontes wrote—if my reason did not compel me to see that she is a magnificent artist" (127). In her personal correspondence, Woolf expresses her preference for Brontë, despite her published view of Austen's superiority.

This contradiction between Woolf's published writing and her private letters points to a similar contradiction between Brontë's private letters, in which she expressed a great dissatisfaction with Austen's novels, and her published writings which betray an Austenian influence. Lucasta Miller, in *The Brontë Myth*, documents Charlotte Brontë's formation of

public opinion with respect to herself and her novels. Brontë's public image had two faces: that of Currer Bell, who represents "the positive myth of female self-creation embodied by her autobiographical heroines, Jane Eyre and Lucy Snowe, who forge their own sense of selfhood in conflict with their social environment," and that of Charlotte Brontë, who "was a quiet and trembling creature, reared in total seclusion, a martyr to duty, and a model of Victorian femininity, whose sins against convention, if she had unwillingly committed any, could be explained away by her isolated upbringing and the sufferings she had endured" (4). The letters in which Brontë derides Austen are written in the Currer Bell mode, in which Brontë paints herself as the self-created female; thus we can read them as a deliberate act of self-construction and not necessarily in her own voice. Miller's comment on Brontë's statement about *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* could just as easily apply to her letters about Austen: "It is doubtful whether she truly and uncomplicatedly believed what she said: she was writing in a highly defensive mood" (171). In order to create the myth of self-creation, Brontë needed to distance herself from all previous writers. She found fault with Austen so that her critics and publishers would not identify her with Austen. She did not want to be identified with anyone but herself; she formulated the image of the individual against society in her public relations work as well as in her novels.

1848: CHARLOTTE BRONTË READS *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE*

After the publication of *Jane Eyre*, G. H. Lewes insisted that Charlotte Brontë read one of his favorite novels, *Pride and Prejudice*. Upon reading it, Brontë claimed ignorance as to why he enjoyed it so much. She claimed to find:

> An accurate daguerreotyped portrait of a commonplace face; a carefully fenced, highly cultivated garden, with neat borders and delicate flowers—but no glance of a bright, vivid physiognomy—no open country—no fresh air—no blue hill—no bonny beck. I should hardly like to live with her ladies and gentlemen, in their elegant but confined houses. (*Letters* 10)

Brontë's disappointment with *Pride and Prejudice* centers on the lack of physical descriptions, whether of the characters or the natural environment around them. While some of these concerns are legitimate, Brontë's artistry is not always as different as she implies in this letter.

It seems to be true that physical descriptions do not interest Austen. When Mr. Bennet tells his family that he has visited Mr. Bingley, he takes great delight in refusing to describe him (48), and Austen teases her audience as mercilessly as Mr. Bennet does his wife and daughters. While it is safe to assume that her principal characters possess all of their limbs and the common facial features, she leaves it to the reader's imagination what those features look like. Even her romantic hero Mr. Darcy is never further described than on his first appearance, where he is said to have a "fine, tall person, handsome features, noble mein" (49). These features are dwelt on repeatedly throughout the book—Mr. Bingley is awed by his height, the Gardiners are impressed by his dignified air, and everyone notices his handsome face—but they are never elaborated

upon. Austen uses these few traits, height, attractiveness, and overall effect, to describe many of the characters, but she does not focus on the details of personal appearance.

Jane Eyre, on the other hand, provides a wealth of description. Brontë (and her heroine) can't seem to keep her pen off of Mr. Rochester's features. She describes him at his first meeting with Jane, and then again when he brings Blanche Ingram and the other fashionable guests to Thornfield (99, 153). Not content with these physical details, she gives her most vivid description when Jane draws his portrait at Gateshead. Here Brontë spends a considerable time dwelling on Mr. Rochester's features as they appear beneath Jane's pencil—the "prominent forehead," the "well-defined nose," the "lustrous and large" eyes, the "jetty hair," and his other facial features all receive their due attention (205). Brontë takes considerable pleasure in these descriptions, giving her reader a clear picture of her hero. These many descriptions prove that the author believes in the words of her character: "Destiny […] is in the face: on the forehead, about the eyes, in the eyes themselves, in the lines of the mouth" (173-174). Mr. Rochester declares his belief in the science of physiognomy while pretending to be a fortune-telling gypsy woman, and this is the first point on which Jane agrees with him. Brontë demonstrates her belief that a person's character can be read in his facial features through her repeated, almost compulsory descriptions of Mr. Rochester and other characters. Austen seems to ignore details of physical appearance in favor of presenting their psychological profiles, but for Brontë the details of the face and head serve as an index to the psyche rather than a distraction from it.

Brontë's principal complaint, however, seems to be the lack of untamed nature in *Pride and Prejudice*. While *Jane Eyre* has many moments out-of-doors, or even indoor moments when characters display an awareness of the outdoors, *Pride and Prejudice* takes place primarily inside, with the characters' focus on what is happening in the rooms, not out the windows.

Austen's style is once again illustrated by her characters' actions when Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy reveal their true affections for each other. The narrator describes them as "walk[ing] on, without knowing in what direction. There was too much to be thought, and felt, and said, for attention to any other objects" (366). Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy are so occupied with their first avowals of love that they do not notice where they are walking. Like the two lovers, Austen does not notice the scenery around them, because her focus is elsewhere. She is too busy describing her characters' thoughts, feelings, and words to spend time looking at the trees. Austen's focus is primarily on social and psychological conditions, not the physical settings in which those conditions exist; hence the lack of description of Oakham Mount (374). Austen only describes the social impact of the walk to Oakham Mount, not the walk itself nor the view from the mount.

Austen's lovers are too enraptured with each other to notice the scenery, but Brontë's are not. During the scene when Jane and Mr. Rochester confess their love after their reunion at Ferndean, Jane describes the scenery both for her lover and her reader: "I led him out of the wet and wild wood into some cheerful fields: I described to him how brilliantly green they were; how the flowers and hedges looked refreshed; how sparklingly blue was the sky" (387). Both the reader and Mr. Rochester are blind in this scene—we only have access to the scenery through Jane's words. Because she knows how much Mr. Rochester loves nature, she describes the scene in great detail for him. Jane and Mr. Rochester are never too busy with their own thoughts or feelings to study nature. When Mr. Rochester begins to plan for their wedding, Jane seeks to distract him by discussing the scenery again. He demands a three-day engagement and she responds with, "The sun has dried up all the rain-drops, sir. The breeze is still: it is quite hot" (393). In a situation where Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy are too overwhelmed with emotion to look at or speak to each other, Mr. Rochester is actively planning, and Jane is hard at work calming

him down by talking about the weather. Instead of withdrawing into their own minds, Jane and Mr. Rochester turn their attention to the world around them.

Austen's strategy for depicting untamed nature can be summed up in a single sentence from *Pride and Prejudice*: "It is not the object of this work to give a description of Derbyshire, nor of any of the remarkable places through which their route thither lay" (254). Whether the interest is more one of picturesque travel writers or Romantic poets, nature description is one of the main concerns of the prose works of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Austen's immediate audience, however, is familiar with William Gilpin's description of the journey Elizabeth takes with the Gardiners in his *Observations, Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty, Made in the Year 1772, On Several Parts of England; Particularly the Mountains and Lakes of Cumberland and Westmoreland* (Litz 15). Gilpin's account establishes the principles of picturesque taste that many Englishmen would adhere to for many years. This dogma places most of its value on order in the landscape: a natural landscape should be as carefully arranged as a painted landscape, and the function of the picturesque writer is to describe these ordered landscapes, whether they exist in nature or not. While Austen satirizes aspects of Gilpin's philosophy, his writings provide the vocabulary for the discourse on nature of her time period.

Brontë's novel works more closely in the tradition of the Romantic poets who reacted against Gilpin. *Jane Eyre* was written fifty years after the earliest drafts of *Pride and Prejudice*, after Romantic ideals concerning nature that were propounded by Wordsworth and other poets, and diffused throughout British culture. Following Wordsworth and Byron, Brontë presents nature not as an orderly picture, but as a source of life and strength. Christopher Heywood argues that in *Jane Eyre*, Brontë inverts the "standard doctrine of the Picturesque movement in art and literature, which maintained that the Picturesque Dales [the model for the Thornfield

landscape] represented moral and social excellence" (191). While Austen satirizes the picturesque in *Pride and Prejudice*, Brontë rejects it completely in favor of Romanticism. She reverses the association of uncultivated nature with chaos and fear, the commonly accepted symbolism of the picturesque and Gothic movements, in order to establish the sublime as the preeminent characteristic of nature, and not the order of the picturesque. The contrast between the two authors' representations of nature can be explained by the contrast between picturesque and Romantic ideologies about nature.

Despite these differences in style, Austen's novel betrays an interest in nature as great as Brontë's. Because of their differences in caste, however, Brontë's characters have more access to the outdoors than Austen's. Paradoxically, the less wealthy Jane Eyre has more freedom than Elizabeth Bennet to enjoy the outdoors. Elizabeth, however, makes the most of the opportunities afforded her. She insists on walking to Netherfield "crossing field after field at a quick pace, jumping over stiles and springing over puddles with impatient activity" (70). Given the opportunity, Elizabeth disdains the proprieties of fashion and indulges in an energetic enjoyment of the outdoors. She is not hesitant or careful when confronted by nature between Meryton and Netherfield, and Austen rewards this activity with the approval of her hero: Mr. Darcy claims that her eyes "were brightened by the exercise" (73).

Elizabeth shows a similar taste for untamed nature when her aunt proposes a journey to the Lake District. She responds with, "what delight! what felicity! You give me fresh life and vigour. Adieu to disappointment and spleen. What are men to rocks and mountains? Oh! what hours of transport we shall spend!" (181). While some critics see this comment as ironic, the narrator affirms her sincerity by assuring the reader that "No scheme could have been more agreeable to Elizabeth," and that after Lydia leaves for Brighton, Elizabeth's "tour to the Lakes

was now the object of her happiest thoughts; it was her best consolation" for enduring the bitterness of Mrs. Bennet and Kitty over not accompanying Lydia (181, 251). Even the thought of being in nature invigorates Elizabeth and provides the antidote for the bitterness she has been indulging against Mr. Darcy and Mr. Bingley. Nature can overpower the effects of mere men. Elizabeth sees only happiness and ecstasy in the plan. The Gardiners, however, cut the journey short, limiting it to Derbyshire; Elizabeth is not permitted to enjoy the full prospect of untamed nature because of her uncle's business. The social realities of her family's position prevent her from enjoying nature in the way she would prefer.

Brontë's heroine, on the other hand, has the opportunity to get outside much more often. At Lowood, Jane Eyre discovers "that a great pleasure, an enjoyment which the horizon only bounded, lay all outside the high and spike-guarded walls of our garden: this pleasure consisted in prospect of noble summits girdling a great hollow, rich in verdure and shadow; in a bright beck, full of dark stones and sparkling eddies" (66). Even as a child Jane derives most of her enjoyment from the outdoors, and as a poor child at a charity school she has the chance to indulge in this enjoyment. She takes great delight not only in experiencing nature, but also in describing that experience for the reader. Jane's inferior social position gives her greater freedom to explore nature than Elizabeth is allowed to enjoy.

Both Austen and Brontë use gardens as substitutes for the untamed nature for which their heroines yearn. As substitutes, however, they cannot provide the full experience. The gardens at Lowood and Hunsford are limited spaces that only allow mediated contact with nature. Jane Eyre remembers that "the deep snows, and, after their melting, the almost impassable roads, prevented our stirring beyond the garden walls" (51). The cold weather keeps the girls confined within the garden, a mediated space where nature is cultivated, but kept in order. Their only

contact with nature is limited to this small site, which leads to Jane's seeking greater freedom in the spring, when the snow and its effects have passed. Cold weather is also a deterring factor for Elizabeth in Kent. While touring Hunsford, "Mr. Collins would have led them round his two meadows, but the ladies not having shoes to encounter the remains of a white frost, turned back" (183). Like the garden at Lowood, the garden at Hunsford is seen as a safe space for young women to encounter nature. The cold weather keeps them within the confines of the mediated natural experience. Both gardens, however, can work as gateways: both heroines use these mediated spaces later to pass on to other places. Jane goes into untamed nature while Elizabeth goes into another garden, the grounds at Rosings Park. The ideas of the gardens are identical, though the social realities of Austen's world prevent the unmediated natural experience that Brontë provides for her heroine.

Despite its inadequacies, there are still benefits to be gained from being outdoors in a garden. The outdoor gardens provide a necessary interval in the dishonest social life practiced indoors on the country estates. Mr. Rochester describes Thornfield as "a mere dungeon […] the gilding is slime and the silk draperies cobwebs; that the marble is sordid slate, and the polished woods mere refuse chips and scaly bark" (189). The house, an emblem of human achievement, is deceptive. While it is built and furnished with the finest materials, the emotional stability and wealth of affection associated with the traditional country estate is missing. Instead Thornfield is a prison, where Mr. Rochester keeps his insane wife; Rochester himself is also imprisoned here by his determination to keep his wife's existence a secret. In the garden, on the other hand, "all is real, sweet, and pure" (189). Mr. Rochester sees nature, whether mediated or not, as a place of truth, where he is free from the deception practiced in the house.

The garden is also a place of truth in *Pride and Prejudice*; Elizabeth is forced to face unpleasant truths about Mr. Darcy and herself on the grounds at Rosings Park. While walking in the grounds, Colonel Fitzwilliam tells her about Mr. Darcy's interference in Mr. Bingley's affair with Jane Bennet, and Mr. Darcy gives her his letter about his involvement with Mr. Wickham (207-208, 215-216). The truth about Mr. Darcy's actions in these situations (and, more importantly, the motives behind those actions) forces Elizabeth to reexamine her opinion of him, and also herself. Elizabeth realizes that "till this moment, I never knew myself" (227). Faced with the fact of Mr. Darcy's honor, Elizabeth is also confronted with her own obstinacy in adhering to opinions and ideas that lack foundation. She has to admit that she is wrong, and that she needs to change. As in *Jane Eyre*, nature, although mediated by landscape designers, provides a respite from the deception of others and self that takes place inside the houses.

Both Elizabeth Bennet and Jane Eyre use windows to connect with nature when they are inside houses. Elizabeth spends her time at Pemberley looking through the windows. She sees that "[e]very disposition of the ground was good; and she looked on the whole scene, the river, the trees scattered on its banks, and the winding of the valley, as far as she could trace it, with delight" (260). Elizabeth uses the window as a way of reconnecting with nature, although she is inside the house. This connection with the outside brings her the joy she anticipates from her journey to the Lakes. Elizabeth seems to be alone in her enjoyment of nature, however. Austen demonstrates this contrast at Hunsford, when Maria Lucas sees Anne de Bourgh and Mrs. Jenkinson through the window in the dining room. Elizabeth is extremely disappointed; she comments that she "had expected at least that the pigs were got into the garden" (185). Elizabeth uses windows to connect with the plants and animals on the other side, while Maria is only interested in seeing her sister pursue social connections.

Charlotte Lucas shares her sister's lack of interest in nature. When Elizabeth flees Mr. Collins's presence after rejecting his marriage proposal, "Charlotte, detained […] by a little curiosity, satisfied herself with walking to the window and pretending not to hear" (144). Charlotte pretends to be interested in the nature outside the house, but she is in fact listening to the conversation between Mr. Collins and Mrs. Bennet. Charlotte makes the window serve the end of her own social betterment instead of connecting with the nature on the other side of it. Mr. Collins also thinks only of the social advantages of windows. He cannot approach Rosings Park without leading his guests through an "enumeration of the windows in front of the house, and his relation of what the glazing altogether had originally cost Sir Lewis De Bourgh" (187). At a time when property taxes were determined by the number of windows, Mr. Collins's numbering of them is another way of bragging about his patroness's wealth. As with her encounter with the window in Hunsford's dining room, Elizabeth is unimpressed. She treats windows as more than just a status symbol; they provide a link with nature rather than establishing social relations.

There is another character who recognizes the relationship between windows and nature: Lady Catherine de Bourgh, however, sees that connection as an annoyance. Complaining about Longbourn, she comments that "[t]his must be a most inconvenient sitting room for the evening, in summer; the windows are full west" (353). Lady Catherine sees the connection with nature as one more thing to complain about. Determined to disapprove of everything that involves Elizabeth Bennet, she attacks even the windows of the house, turning what Elizabeth sees as a good thing into a decided negative. Austen uses Charlotte Lucas, Mr. Collins, Maria Lucas, and Lady Catherine as foils for Elizabeth. By their indifference to nature, the reader sees Elizabeth's devotion to it more clearly, as well as the attitude toward nature that her society holds.

The windows in *Jane Eyre* provide a connection with nature when a closer connection is not available. Like her more direct experiences with nature, Jane derives strength from her windows. While windows can be construed as barriers, Jane uses them as gateways. In the opening scene she is careful to mention them as "protecting, but not separating me from the drear November day" (5). Even when the world outside is unpleasant, the window does not divide Jane from nature. When Bessie calls her to meet Mr. Brocklehurst for the first time, Jane delays so that she can feed the bird on the other side of the window (25). Only after the bird is fed and the window is closed does Jane answer Bessie's questions and prepare for the meeting. Jane uses the window as an opportunity to connect with nature instead of using the window as a protective barrier from the cold weather. After Mrs. Reed tells Mr. Brocklehurst that Jane lies, she "got up, I went to the door; I came back again; I walked to the window, across the room, then close up to her" (30). Jane does not receive the support she needs from the door, the entrance to the rest of the house; she can only receive this from the window, the entrance to the natural world. With the strength of character she gains from the window, she confronts Mrs. Reed with her deceit. Jane also decides to advertise for a new position while looking out of her open window (74). This decision leads to her appointment at Thornfield. Both of these experiences gathering strength at windows lead Jane to a new phase in her life and a new home.

The windows also allow the moonlight to shine on Jane's life at important times. Robert B. Heilman describes the moon as representing "an 'inner light'" for Brontë, as well as "a means of relating that inner light to a universal illumination" (199). The moon, as a natural phenomenon, represents moral and supernatural realities for Brontë. When the moon comes through a window, Jane can see clearly her own feelings and desires, as well as the moral law by which she lives her life. Moonlight influences her decisions both to leave and to return to Mr.

Rochester (281, 369). When she hears Mr. Rochester's call, the "room was full of moonlight" (369). The moonlight is thus associated with supernatural elements, which are wholly absent in Austen's novel. The presence and absence of the supernatural is also indicative of the differences between the picturesque and the Romantic ideals of nature. The picturesque concerns itself with beautiful sights without looking for deeper meaning, while Romantics turned contact with nature into a religious experience. The differences in presentation owe more to the established traditions of nature writing and the economic situations of the characters than the authors' attitudes.

Brontë also targets Austen's houses in her letter to Lewes, but the descriptions of Pemberley and Ferndean, when compared with the language of Brontë's letter, call the seriousness of her critique into question. As the final resting-places of marital bliss in the novels, the estates are both associated with nature in various ways. The contrast between the houses, like the differences between the portrayals of the heroines, demonstrates the disparity between the authors' opportunities to experience nature. When Elizabeth arrives at Pemberley for the first time, she realizes that she has "never seen a place for which nature [has] done more, or where natural beauty [has] been so little counteracted by an awkward taste" (259). Mr. Darcy's management of his estate reflects his appreciation for nature. Unlike the other estates in the novel, he preserves as much of the natural environment as possible while making room for himself in the landscape. While Mr. Darcy creates the appearance of a wealthy man who enjoys living in nature, he still alters the landscape considerably, however imperceptibly. At Ferndean, there are "no flowers, no garden-beds; only a broad gravel-walk girdling a grass-plat, and this set in the heavy frame of the forest" (379). Mr. Rochester has done nothing to create an effect at all—he merely allows nature to work without guide or impediment. While Mr. Darcy carefully

performs his connection with nature through landscaping, Mr. Rochester achieves a closer unity with his environment without any effort at all. This difference in estate management reflects the difference between the picturesque and Romantic movements: picturesque Pemberley needs to manage the landscape, while Romantic Ferndean allows nature to run its own course.

Both estates tend to blur the sharply-divided line between house and grounds of Thornfield and Rosings Park. As Elizabeth tours Pemberley, she notices the view from the windows, and "from every window there were beauties to be seen" (260). While the windows at Longbourn, Hunsford, and Rosings Park are used only for social reasons, Pemberley's windows open on to nature. They connect the natural world around the estate with the people inside the house, blurring the lines so strictly drawn between house and garden on Austen's other estates. This line is blurred even further at Ferndean. As Jane enters Ferndean, she walks through "a grass-grown track descending the forest aisle, between hoar and knotty shafts and under branched arches" (378). The forest surrounding Ferndean seems architectural, like an arched corridor. Jane also sees the house itself as being "scarce, by this dim light, distinguishable from the trees; so dank and green were its decaying walls" (379). The house and the forest at Ferndean fade into each other, so that by living there Rochester and Jane inhabit the Romantic ideal of nature, while Darcy and Elizabeth live on the perfect picturesque estate.

Brontë's language for criticizing Austen's estates is ironic: while Ferndean is closer to the Romantic ideal of nature than picturesque Pemberley, there is "no open country—no fresh air—no blue hill—no bonny beck" there. Ferndean is so surrounded with greenery that there is "no opening anywhere" (379). The "confined" country house is not Pemberley; it is Ferndean. Brontë leaves her heroine to celebrate her ten years of wedded bliss in a home that is decaying and narrow, while Austen leaves hers in a home that is surrounded by wide open spaces, hills,

and streams. By her own words, Brontë should prefer Pemberley to Ferndean. The apparent contradiction is found only in Brontë's words; in her letter she describes the picturesque ideal of nature, while her novel presents the Romantic ideal. Romantic poets had little use for buildings that were not ruins—Ferndean seems like a barely-habitable version of Tintern Abbey. The contrast between Brontë's portrayal of nature in her letter and in her novel point to the performative nature of her comments.

Brontë's artistry is in many ways parallel to Austen's. While they write in different traditions of nature writing, they share an appreciation of nature and express that appreciation through their heroines' attitudes. Despite the similarities, Brontë rejects Lewes's implication that she needs to write more like Austen. In 1848 Brontë is still struggling to establish her own place in literature, and she prefers her own place to being known as anyone's literary daughter, even Jane Austen's.

1850: BRONTË READS *EMMA*

In 1850 Brontë requested some of Austen's novels from her publisher, so she could honestly claim to have read them (*Letters* 349). Two months later, after reading *Emma*, she censured Austen again, with even greater asperity:

> what sees keenly, speaks aptly, moves flexibly, it suits her to study, but what throbs fast and full, though hidden, what the blood rushes through, what is the unseen seat of Life and the sentient target of death—*this* Miss Austen ignores; she no more, with her mind's eye, beholds the heart of her race than each man, with bodily vision sees the heart in his heaving breast. (383)

Such a valuation of *Emma* is largely a matter of perspective: not only the individual reader's perspective, but the perspective from which the story is told. Austen tells the story from the point of view of Emma Woodhouse, who is slow to recognize her own feelings and quick to misread or disavow completely the feelings of others, as it suits her own aims.

Since most of the story comes from Emma's perspective, it is easy to assume that Austen lends her narrative authority to her protagonist. Marvin Mudrick, however, notes, "Emma is moved to play God, but without tenderness or social caution (or the artist's awareness) she falls into every conceivable mistake and misjudgment. […] Without tenderness or caution, she makes the worst of every situation" (194). Emma tries to control the lives of other characters, arrogating the novelist's prerogative to herself. Austen, however, denies Emma's attempts to direct the narrative. Emma's repeated failures (due to an insensibility to the feelings of others) show that she never gains narrative authority. Judging Emma as a representative of Austen is a mistake that comes from looking only at the surface, just as Emma does. It seems unlikely that

Brontë would read *Emma*, a book she requested, so superficially. The contrast between her comments and what lies beneath the surface of *Emma* seems to indicate the performative nature of her disparagement.

As Margaret Lenta compares the portrayals of governesses in *Emma* and *Jane Eyre*, she expresses a tacit agreement with Brontë's letter. She argues that "Jane Austen's particular interest in this area was in the effect of economic constraints upon women. Charlotte Brontë's strongest focus, though related to economic matters, was not the same: her interest was in the woman denied emotional outlet" (Lenta 27). Lenta claims that Austen's novels are not interested in the emotions of her characters, but only in their financial situations, while Brontë focused on the emotional lives of her characters with less emphasis on their fortunes. Both authors, however, share the same concern, which Lenta hints at but does not argue: the effect of economic status on the emotional life. She does argue that in these novels, the figure of the governess works as "a representative figure of distressed womanhood" (28). Lenta admits that *Emma* and *Jane Eyre* do not make "the most direct or literary comparison" (27-28). The more direct comparison would be between *Emma* and *Shirley*; in both novels the author presents a variety of lifestyle options for women: poor old maids, governesses, and wealthy, independent young women. The novels also demonstrate the impact that these options have on the emotional states of the women involved.

Both authors present somewhat sympathetic images of the state of women who remain unmarried. Austen's Miss Bates "enjoyed a most uncommon degree of popularity for a woman neither young, handsome, rich, nor married. Miss Bates stood in the very worst predicament in the world for having much of the public favour; and she had no intellectual superiority to make atonement to herself, or frighten those who might hate her, into outward respect" (17). Austen

presents Miss Bates initially in her negative capacities—no youth, beauty, wealth, or intelligence. Despite these negatives, Miss Bates "loved every body, was interested in every body's happiness, quick-sighted to every body's merits; thought herself a most fortunate creature" (17). Miss Bates's habit of demonstrating loving attention to others secures the popularity that seems so mysterious from the description of her deficiencies. Her gratitude and affection win her approval from the community.

Emma's insult to Miss Bates at Box Hill is a momentary deviation from this communal good-will toward Miss Bates, and the deviation brings to light the interplay of economics and emotions in her character. Mr. Knightley reminds Emma that Miss Bates "is poor; she has sunk from the comforts she was born to; and, if she live to old age, must probably sink more" (295). While Miss Bates seems to live fairly comfortably, she relies on the kindness of her neighbors to support her. Her income is extremely limited and will only get worse, but her emotional life is richer than that of some wealthier people. Mr. Knightley characterizes Emma's rude behavior as "unfeeling," because Miss Bates "felt your full meaning" (294). Emma wishes to trivialize Miss Bates's emotions, but Mr. Knightley reminds her that it is she, Emma, who is out of touch with her emotional life. While Miss Bates is poor, she is deeply hurt by Emma's insult. Mr. Knightley tells Emma that Miss Bates's "situation should secure your compassion" (295). According to him, Miss Bates's poverty should provoke an emotional response in Emma; she should be able to identify with the sufferings of others. This failure to feel is a product of wealth, not penury. Miss Bates's economic position does not prevent her from feeling strong emotion.

Brontë presents a parallel character in Miss Ainley. Miss Ainley is also presented in terms of her deficiencies before her assets. The narrator states, "In her first youth she must have

been ugly; now, at the age of fifty, she was *very* ugly. […] Then she was prim in dress and manner: she looked, spoke, and moved the complete old maid" (196-197). Not only is Miss Ainley unattractive, she "straitened herself to privation" to help others (197). Like Miss Bates, Miss Ainley accompanies her ugliness, age, and poverty with love for everyone around her. In conversation with Caroline Helstone, Miss Ainley "talked never of herself—always of others. Their faults she passed over; her theme was their wants, which she sought to supply; their sufferings, which she longed to alleviate" (197). Miss Ainley's love, like Miss Bates's, looks for the best in everyone; Miss Ainley also makes her love practical by bringing the economic and emotional needs of her neighbors to the attention of someone who can help. Miss Ainley's emotions, instead of being manifested in slights against herself, show themselves in her joy at helping others. When Shirley and Caroline enlist her to help their charitable projects, "at the sight of the money Miss Ainley's eyes filled with joyful tears; for she already saw the hungry fed, the naked clothed, the sick comforted thereby" (269). The strong emotions of Miss Ainley's life center in the good she can do, not in the treatment she receives. Her emotions run deeply, but in different channels than those of the other characters, even the other old maids.

Brontë presents another older single woman, Miss Mann. While Miss Mann does not share a diffuse love for the community with Miss Ainley and Miss Bates, she is still a good person who demonstrates a practical love:

> She was a perfectly honest, conscientious woman, who had performed duties in her day from whose severe anguish many a human Peri, gazelle-eyed, silken-tressed, and silver-tongued, would have shrunk appalled: she had passed alone through protracted scenes of suffering, exercised rigid self-denial, made large sacrifices of time, money, health, for those who had repaid her only by ingratitude. (194)

Miss Mann has given up her advantages of wealth, youth, and beauty for others, who do not acknowledge her sacrifices. She has performed feats from which the young and beautiful generally shrink, only to be repaid with the rejection of her community because of the title "old maid." Despite her poverty and abandonment, she still feels "a starved, ghostly longing for appreciation and affection" (195). Miss Mann's emotional life may resemble an arid wasteland, but her emotions continue to affect her. The rejection she has experienced touches her deeply, just as Emma's rejection of Miss Bates touches her. Just as Miss Ainley shows Miss Bates's love on a larger scale, Miss Mann represents her rejection to a greater extent. Brontë's representation of old maids is more extreme than Austen's, but both show clearly that older single women continue to feel deeply, despite their economic poverty.

These "old maids," however, are not the central characters in their respective books. Both Austen and Brontë focus their narratives on younger women who are still negotiating their economic status. Marilyn Butler recognizes in Jane Fairfax the characteristics of Brontë's heroines: "The complex inwardness of Jane's character, its capacity for withdrawal, for suffering in loneliness and secrecy" (269). Jane also shares with them their economic status—she is the only female character who has to earn her living that Austen takes seriously. Like Jane Eyre and Caroline Helstone, Jane Fairfax prepares to become a governess. Brontë treats being a governess as a difficult job with little honor. Jane Eyre mildly refers to it as "a new servitude" (75). As the teacher in a girls' school, Jane Eyre is accustomed to the exertions that would be required of her as a governess, and so makes the transition smoothly. Caroline Helstone, however, is accustomed to a life of comparative leisure. Shirley Keeldar warns her that "it is not in your nature to bear the desolate life governesses generally lead" (246). Shirley judges Caroline by her own experience; Shirley is unaware of the social isolation of Caroline's life, with

her unsympathetic uncle and his restriction on her intercourse with her only friends, the Moores. Shirley is more accurate when she tells Caroline that she had "[b]etter be a slave at once" than become a governess (245). As a governess, Caroline would not be able to command her own time, nor would she be able to command the respect to which she is accustomed. Though the isolation would not be different from Caroline's current situation, the fall in caste would make a bigger difference than she realizes.

Jane Fairfax faces such a change of class status in *Emma*. When Mrs. Elton finds a position for her, Jane tells her, "You may well class the delight, the honour, and the comfort of such a situation together […] they are pretty sure to be equal" (236). She envisions very little delight, honor, or comfort from becoming a governess, no matter how rich the family. Jane sees her future as a governess more clearly and with greater pessimism than Caroline Helstone, who only wants to escape the life she is living. Jane Fairfax recognizes the necessity of becoming a governess, but does not welcome the occupation. She refers to the "governess-trade" as the sale "not quite of human flesh—but of human intellect" (235). For Jane Fairfax, becoming a governess is a way of selling her mind, comparable to selling her body as a slave or as a prostitute. Jane Fairfax shares Shirley Keeldar's dismal ideas of a governess's prospects, not Caroline Helstone's hopeful plans for escape.

Jane Fairfax and Caroline Helstone have rich emotional lives, presumably because of the suffering they experience. Jane is full of the throbbing emotions that bubble up beneath the surface of her behavior that is characteristic of Brontë's heroines. These emotions reveal their strength when John Knightley expresses his hope for her marriage and subsequent children: "A pleasant 'thank you' seemed meant to laugh it off, but a blush, a quivering lip, a tear in the eye, shewed that it was felt beyond a laugh" (230). Jane tries to pass this off as one of the

meaningless compliments that pass between old friends, but she does not succeed; her tear, blush, and quiver betray her unspoken anxiety about her future. John does not realize how close Jane is to achieving the marriage and children, though the stress of a lengthy, uncertain secret engagement takes its toll on her emotional life. She cannot conceal her emotion, as she would like to do.

Jane seems unable to keep "hidden" "what throbs fast and full." As in the scene with John Knightley, she betrays her emotions when Emma visits her after the delivery of the pianoforte. When Emma arrives, Jane is "standing with her back to them, intent on her pianoforté" (188). Even in a lower-income household like the Bateses', visitors are announced in Austen's middle class society. To continue facing away from the door when guests are announced is a mark of rudeness, explained by Jane's absorption in the instrument and her thoughts about it. Emma notices her agitation and realizes that "she had not yet possessed the instrument long enough to touch it without emotion" (189). Jane's emotions at receiving such a gift from her lover overpower her temporarily; her emotions escape her control, and will not be repressed in company. She cannot prevent their display. Frank realizes this and goads her into continuing to demonstrate her affection for him. He calls the pianoforte a gift "so thoroughly from the heart […] [t]rue affection only could have prompted it," and Emma sees Jane react with "all the deep blush of consciousness" and "a smile of secret delight" (191). Jane cannot resist the emotions that accompany both Frank's gift and his declaration—she must provide some outlet for them. Jane reveals that she has the emotional complexity that Brontë claimed not to find in Austen's work.

Caroline Helstone suffers a similar ordeal, but no one notices her betrayal of emotion. When meeting Robert at Fieldhead, the darkness prevents Robert from seeing her clearly, so that

"[n]o one could affirm that she had trembled or blushed, that her heart had quaked, or her nerves thrilled: none could prove emotion" (251). Caroline is deeply affected by Robert's presence, just as Jane Fairfax is by Frank Churchill and his pianoforte, and she shows similar symptoms, only there is no Emma Woodhouse to see and draw false conclusions. Caroline is similarly embarrassed, since she has to hide her love for Robert and her jealousy of Shirley, which is complex and difficult because she still loves Shirley as her only close friend.

Like Brontë's heroine, Jane's emotional sufferings are manifested in physical illness. When Frank Churchill leaves Highbury right before the intended ball, Jane becomes "particularly unwell, however, suffering from headache to a degree, which made her aunt declare, that had the ball taken place, she did not think Jane could have attended it" (206). What Miss Bates and Emma are unaware of, is that if the ball had taken place Jane would not have had her headaches. Her emotional uncertainty from Frank's continued dependence on Mrs. Churchill causes her migraines. While her headache could be read as feigned, its reality is corroborated by later events. When Jane decides to become a governess and give up her engagement to Frank, her doctor diagnoses her with "severe headachs, and a nervous fever" (306). This physical illness is primarily a result of emotional stress; Jane Fairfax is so acutely aware of her emotional state that it makes her sick. Caroline also becomes physically ill from jealousy. After Hortense tells Louis that Robert is "the favourite" of Shirley, Caroline becomes ill, crediting the source of the illness to "a fever of mental excitement, and a languor of long conflict and habitual sadness" (398, 399). Caroline's illness, like Jane's, is psychosomatic. Depression, followed by her overpowering emotions, damages her physical well-being as well as her mental state. Both the characters' emotional lives are powerful enough to affect their health.

Austen and Brontë express the emotions of Jane and Caroline in similarly violent terms. When Emma learns about Jane's engagement to Frank, she realizes how jealous Jane has been of her, and thinks, "An airing in the Hartfield carriage would have been the rack, and arrow-root from the Hartfield store-room must have been poison" (317). While Austen is not above a little exaggeration, and Emma certainly is not, similar images of torture and assassination are rare in the Austen canon. Such violence, however, is more common to Brontë's more explicitly Gothic pen. When Martin Yorke teases Caroline, telling her Robert Moore is at the brink of death, she accuses him, "you have almost killed me" (531). Brontë uses an image of physical death to represent Caroline's frame of mind, just as Austen uses in referring to the emotional state of Jane Fairfax.

The emotional lives of both characters have a direct bearing on their economic status as well. Jane Fairfax does not have an immediate economic necessity for becoming a governess. Miss Bates tells Emma that Jane "had made up her mind to close with nothing till Colonel Campbell's return, and nothing should induce her to enter into any engagement at present" (299). Jane's ability to postpone her employment shows that her current economic situation is acceptable for the time being; like Caroline Helstone, "[t]here really was no present pecuniary need for her to leave a comfortable home and 'take a situation" (246). However, economic forces are not the only ones working on Jane and Caroline. Both choose to become governesses in order to escape the uncertainty of their romantic lives. Frank's marked attention to Emma and neglect of Jane induces her to accept the position Mrs. Elton offers her (347). Jealousy has made her desperate for a change in her life; becoming a governess will remove her from painful contact with people and places. Caroline's emotions also lead to her decision to become a governess. Robert's capricious behavior provoke Caroline's "strange sufferings, […] her racked

nights and dismal days" (247). Her emotional state pushes her into becoming a governess, not her financial state. She sees being a governess as a chance to escape the intolerable state of her feelings, much like Jane Fairfax. Both women seek to become governesses as a way of changing their circumstances, which have become intolerable because of the emotions associated with their homes.

While Caroline Helstone is in Jane Fairfax's place, Shirley Keeldar is in Emma's situation. Both Emma and Shirley are independent women, mistresses of their own fortunes and lives. As such, they already have the security that most women are seeking in their pursuit of matrimony. Emma denies her need for the "usual inducements" to marriage when she tells Harriet, "Fortune I do not want; employment I do not want; consequence I do not want" (68). Emma is wealthy, active, and important in her community without marrying; therefore she sees no reason to marry. Shirley occupies a similar position. She tells Caroline,

> My thousand a-year is not merely a matter of dirty bank-notes and jaundiced guineas (let me speak respectfully of both though, for I adore them); but, it may be, health to the drooping, strength to the weak, consolation to the sad. I was determined to make something of it better than a fine old house to live in, than satin gowns to wear; better than deference from acquaintance, and homage from the poor. (248)

Shirley has more money than she can spend, a good cause with which to spend her time and energy, and no desire to lead the community. Emma and Shirley thus evade the economic necessity for marriage that haunts so many women (fictional and non-fictional) of the early nineteenth century.

Not only is marriage unnecessary for Emma and Shirley, they see it as a fall from their position as single women. As single women with fortunes, they control their lives and

households without reference to anyone else. Marriage would require submission to a husband's tastes, opinions, and plans, which neither of them welcomes. Emma says that "few married women are half as much mistress of their husband's house, as I am of Hartfield" (68). Shirley expresses the same sentiment when she tells Caroline that "I could never be my own mistress more," if she were to marry (223). Women with financial security are more likely to be sought for their money than they are to seek marriage, as Mr. Elton and Robert Moore propose unsuccessfully to Emma and Shirley, respectively. Emma and Shirley would be stooping to marry these men, and without love, such a posture is unacceptable.

Both Emma and Shirley admit the possibility of marriage under only one condition: true love. Emma admits, "Were I to fall in love, indeed, it would be a different thing!" (68). She recognizes that she has never been in love, and that if such a thing were to happen, her views on marriage would change. Love is a necessary precondition for marriage, in Emma's eyes, and Shirley agrees. She tells Mr. Sympson, "Before I marry, I am resolved to esteem—to admire—to *love*" (444, Brontë's emphasis). As with Emma, Shirley has no economic or social reasons to marry; therefore, she insists on marrying only for love.

Emma draws a parallel between personal economy and her emotional life. She tells Harriet that "a very narrow income has a tendency to contract the mind, and sour the temper. Those who can barely live, and who live perforce in a very small, and generally very inferior, society, may well be illiberal and cross" (69). According to Emma, those who are poor in wealth tend to be poor in emotion as well, but Austen does not share this opinion. As we have seen, Miss Bates and Jane Fairfax have rich emotional lives, despite their precarious financial position. Emma, on the other hand, is largely unaware of the emotions she feels until fairly late in the novel, when she recognizes her love for Mr. Knightley. Early on, when she quarrels with Mr.

Knightley about Harriet Smith and Robert Martin, Emma's frustration has "more indistinctness in the causes" than Mr. Knightley's has (53). This inability to discern the causes of her feelings characterizes Emma's ignorance of her own emotions during most of the novel.

Emma's ignorance of her own emotions centers on her relationships with Frank Churchill and Mr. Knightley. Emma tricks herself into thinking she loves Frank, when in reality the only man she ever loves is Mr. Knightley. Emma's good opinion of Frank begins as a mask for her true indifference, but she argues herself into believing she really does think highly of him. In arguing with Mr. Knightley, Emma says "a good deal more than she felt" in the praise of Frank Churchill, "taking the other side of the question from her real opinion" for the sake of debate with Mr. Knightley (114). Emma actually agrees with Mr. Knightley's censures of Frank's apparent indifference to his connection with the Westons, but she contradicts him simply for the joy of contradiction. Her self-assigned role as Frank's supporter leads her to praise him far beyond her real feelings, and by speaking highly of him, she begins to think highly of him.

Austen makes it clear that Emma's feelings for Frank Churchill are only superficial, and depend on superficial things. Emma begins her friendship with Frank with him courting her affections; she is struck at their first meeting by "his certainly thinking it worth while to try to please her" (150). Frank purposely turns the conversation to subjects that will lead to compliments to her and her friends, and Emma enjoys being pursued by a pleasant man. Emma also enjoys the publicity of their relationship. At the Coles' party, she imagines "what every body present must be thinking. She was his object, and every body must perceive it" (173). Emma likes not only to be courted by a pleasant man, but to have everyone in town know she is being courted by a pleasant man. Her affection for him depends strongly on her having an audience for whom they can perform their relationship. It is not Frank himself Emma is

beginning to love; she loves the display of a public courtship, whether real or not. When the Westons plan a ball for Frank, Emma has "inclination enough for shewing people again how delightfully Mr. Frank Churchill and Miss Woodhouse danced" (194). She wants to show off for the town. She has no real love for Frank—her thoughts are with the performance of affection, not her fellow-performer.

While she tries to convince herself that these superficial attractions have deeper roots, Emma really has no intention ever of requiting his affection. Austen summarizes Emma's feelings with, "Had she intended ever to *marry* him, it might have been worth while to pause and consider, and try to understand the value of his preference, and the character of his temper; but for all the purposes of their acquaintance, he was quite amiable enough" (196, Austen's emphasis). Emma makes it clear (to herself) that she is only interested in a platonic relationship. Since her interests in their future are not serious, she does not even worry about getting to know him well. He is friendly and that is all she cares about. She may enjoy the attention of having the community believe her to be the object of Frank Churchill's affections, but not the reality of being his future wife. Frank may dominate her thoughts, but he cannot work his way into her heart. When thinking about her feelings for him,

> Emma continued to entertain no doubt of her being in love. Her ideas only varied as to the how much. At first, she thought it was a good deal; and afterwards, but little. […] though thinking of him so much, […] the conclusion of every imaginary declaration on his side was that she *refused him*. […] When she became sensible of this, it struck her that she could not be very much in love; for in spite of her previous and fixed determination never to quit her father, never to marry, a strong attachment certainly must

> produce more of a struggle than she could foresee in her own feelings. (206-207, Austen's emphasis)

Throughout this passage Austen emphasizes the intellectual nature of Emma's feelings for Frank—her emotions occupy her head but not her heart. Emma thinks of Frank, and of her affection for him, but she feels none of it. The love affair remains an idea, never becoming a passion. When Emma actually consults her feelings, she realizes that it will cost her no pain to refuse Frank's advances; therefore, logically, she cannot be in love with him. Romantic love is an abstract concept for Emma because it has formed no part of her conscious existence; love is not the passionate, life-altering experience that it is for Brontë's heroines. Thus, Austen easily sounds the death-knell for the Emma-Frank relationship with the words, "she had forgotten to think of him" (286). When Frank is out of sight, he is out of mind for Emma, unlike the couples of true lovers in the novels of both Austen and Brontë, who demonstrate their constant love, often during separations of several months.

Shirley also has to deal with a highly publicized love affair with a man she does not love—two, in fact. Unlike Emma, however, Shirley never deceives herself as to the nature of her feelings for Robert Moore or Sir Philip Nunnely. After Sir Philip arrives in Yorkshire, the narrator reveals that "[u]niversal report had indeed ceased to couple her name with that of Moore" (449-450). Rumor unites Shirley with Robert, though their feelings never do. When he proposes to her, she tells him, "I never loved you. Be at rest there. My heart is as pure of passion for you as yours is barren of affection for me" (500). Despite public opinion as to the advantages of the match, there is never any real love affair between Shirley and Robert. She makes it clear that any relationship between them has been strictly fraternal: she likes him "as much as if you were my brother" (499). Shirley maintains her knowledge of the state of her

feelings in the face of rumors about her intentions to marry Robert, even in the face of a proposal from the man she admits that she admires. Shirley understands her feelings, and refuses to pretend not to.

Shirley's self-knowledge is put to a second test with Sir Philip Nunnely. When he comes into Yorkshire, "the gossips thought they had found the key to her conduct" (445). Everyone assumes that Shirley has been refusing offers of marriage because she has been waiting for Sir Philip to come and propose to her. Shirley, however, has no such intention. She tells her uncle that she will not marry Sir Philip "because I *only* esteem him" (517, Brontë's emphasis). Although Shirley thinks well of Sir Philip, she does not love him enough to marry him. As in her affection for Robert Moore, Shirley knows where her feelings for Sir Philip end—far short of matrimony.

Not only does Emma manage a superficial love affair with no true feelings, she also lacks the ability to recognize her true feelings for Mr. Knightley. From the beginning of the novel, Emma feels that it is unfair to compare anyone with him (27). Mr. Weston or Mr. Elton might be used a standard of comparison, but almost no man alive can measure up to Mr. Knightley in Emma's mind. The height of the pedestal on which she places him should alert her to the state of her affections, but it does not. Emma expects everyone to treat him with the same respect that she does, so when Mrs. Elton refers to him as "Knightley" without the Mr., Emma is especially affronted (218). To refer to him in such a casual way so immediately after her introduction, when Emma maintains formality of address after a life-long acquaintance, is out of place for Mrs. Elton, but Emma's vehemence in objecting to Mrs. Elton's familiarity is also out of place. It betrays her real feelings for Mr. Knightley to the reader, but not to Emma herself.

Emma disguises her true motives from herself with regard to Mr. Knightley's love life. Her initial reaction to the idea of his marrying Jane Fairfax is to object to the interruption of the succession to the estate—her nephew is the heir-apparent as long as Mr. Knightley remains childless (176). When she thinks of it at greater length, Emma thinks of the effect on John and Isabella Knightley, of having a sister-in-law from a family in reduced circumstances; then she recurs to the reduction of her nephews' inheritance; then she moves on to the interruption of Mr. Knightley's daily visits to Hartfield, on which her father depends; finally settling on her personal distaste for the idea: "A Mrs. Knightley for them all to give way to!—No" (179). Emma enacts a reversal of literary conventions—instead of thinking herself in love with a man when she really loves his wealth, Emma pretends to think only of Mr. Knightley's fortune and social status when she really loves him. The truth of Emma's love for Mr. Knightley takes her completely by surprise. The recognition of her true feelings "dart[s] through her, with the speed of an arrow" (320). Emma's regard for Mr. Knightley has never been far from the surface of her consciousness, and it is a very short leap from "Mr. Knightley must not marry!" to "Mr. Knightley must marry no one but herself!" (176, 320). Emma realizes the true nature of her feelings when she is faced by the possibility of suffering because of them.

Shirley is also in love with a man from the beginning of the novel, but she can recognize her own feelings; Shirley knows that she is in love with Louis Moore. Early in their friendship, she reveals to Caroline that "[a]t heart," she is not the "[m]ateless, solitary bird" that she perceives Caroline to be (237-238). She does not disclose the identity of her beloved, but she leaves no doubt that she is in love. Mr. Yorke links her with Robert Moore, because he notices her "change countenance and colour at the mere mention of his name," without remembering that Robert and Louis are both named Mr. Moore (449). Shirley even asks Mr. Yorke to give her

away when she becomes Mrs. Moore (359). Shirley knows these hints are misleading; she opens herself to the kind of misinterpretation Emma Woodhouse commits toward the people around her. While she is aware of her emotions, Shirley courts misdirection to keep her feelings from becoming common knowledge.

Shirley is cautious in her relationship with Louis. She tells him that "[h]aving seen you distant, she at once learned to withdraw" (483). She chooses to regulate her conduct according to his, and perform "a careful improvement on your own coolness" (483). To do otherwise would be "to compromise her self-respect" (483). Shirley refuses to demonstrate her affection for a man who will not demonstrate his affection first. Her personal laws of propriety, while occasionally different from those of society as represented by the Sympsons, still forbid being the first to betray emotion. Shirley only admits to her feelings for Louis when he confesses his love for her (578-580). Shirley has been aware of her feelings from the beginning, but she refuses to perform them until Louis reveals his emotion.

Since Emma and Shirley occupy similar social positions, it would seem that their emotional lives should also be similar. The difference between them comes from their father figures and their governesses. Mr. Woodhouse and Mr. Sympson both show a selfish attitude toward the marriages of Emma and Shirley, but their selfishness takes different forms. Mr. Woodhouse objects to Emma's marriage, telling her that "it would be a great deal better for her to remain single" (366). His selfishness manifests itself in a desire to keep Emma with him, forever a daughter and never a wife. Mr. Sympson, on the other hand, "anxiously desired to […] give her in charge to a proper husband, and wash his hands of her for ever" (443). His selfishness manifests itself in a desire to get rid of Shirley as quickly and as advantageously as possible. Shirley is therefore placed in the situation of evaluating proposals approved by Mr.

Sympson, which places her in dialogue with her own heart. Emma is sheltered from any proposal because her father will approve of none; thus she is not forced to question herself on the subject of her feelings.

Governesses also play an important role in determining the heroines' level of emotional self-awareness. Miss Taylor is unable to "impose any restraint" on Emma because of "the mildness of her temper" (5). Only possessing "the shadow of authority," she cannot make Emma reflect on the nature of her own feelings. The relationship between Mrs. Pryor and Shirley is very different. Shirley's behavior to Mrs. Pryor is marked with "complete docility" (229). When Mrs. Pryor asks Shirley to take care of Caroline, Shirley says, "You shall be minutely obeyed," a promise Emma cannot make to anyone (218). Shirley's love and respect for her governess lead her to obedience; this submission of her will to another's paves the way for the understanding of her own emotions that Emma lacks.

Both Austen and Brontë demonstrate the interplay of economics and emotions in their novels. The authors seem to agree that suffering promotes self-knowledge, and most women, no matter what their economic situations, have to suffer. Emma, the woman who suffers least, is also the least self-aware. Difficult circumstances, instead of contracting the emotional life, deepen it, thus strengthening the "unseen seat of Life" that Brontë claimed not to find in Austen's work. Characters like Jane Fairfax and Miss Bates, when set beside their counterparts in Brontë's own novels, however, provide evidence for the theory that Brontë's complaint is a performance for her publisher, instead of an expression of her true opinions.

1853: *VILLETTE*

It seems as though Brontë's reading of Austen consisted solely of the 1848 reading of *Pride and Prejudice* and the 1850 reading of *Emma*. These two books, however, both wield influence over her final completed novel, *Villette*. *Villette* contains Brontë's most explicit portrayal of individuals struggling against and ultimately defying constant surveillance. Throughout their careers, both Austen and Brontë were interested in the role society plays in observing and controlling individual behavior. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen explores the ways in which Elizabeth and Lydia Bennet escape the society's surveillance, while in *Emma* she adds to the portrayal of those who defy the community the workings of the observing and controlling mind of Emma Woodhouse. Brontë combines both approaches in *Villette*, with her presentation of Lucy Snowe, who is both the observer and the observed.

As in *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma*, the characters in *Villette* escape the monitoring eyes that seek to contain their sexual energies. The elopements at the end of *Pride and Prejudice* and *Villette* are both seen as failures of surveillance and rejections of the rules that govern their societies. When Elizabeth first hears of Lydia's elopement with Mr. Wickham, she says, "Had his character been known, this could not have happened" (287). She blames herself for not making public her knowledge of his true personality; secrecy in this case becomes a crime against society. Mrs. Bennet, on the other hand, blames those who should have been observing Lydia's behavior. She claims that Lydia "is not the kind of girl to do such a thing, if she had been well looked after," so the Forsters are guilty of "some great neglect or other" (296). Mrs. Bennet puts the blame in the wrong place: Lydia's elopement is not the failure of one particular instance of surveillance; it shows the failure of the entire system. Both Elizabeth and her mother

credit communal knowledge and observation with the power to police the actions of the individual, but Lydia's ability to escape proves the inadequacy of social control through surveillance.

Ginevra Fanshawe's elopement is also a failure of surveillance. Lucy notices that "Deep was the dismay of the surveillante teachers, deeper the horror of the defaulting directress" (522). She is careful to point out the role of the teachers in policing the behavior of the students, as well as placing the principal fault on Madame Beck, who, as director, should have been able to monitor and control all the action at her school. Like Lydia's elopement with Wickham, Ginevra and de Hamal's escape is both the fault of a nonspecific group of people (Meryton society and the teachers) and of specific characters (the Forsters and Madame Beck). Ginevra breaks through the system of surveillance in order to pursue her own sexual desire.

In order for society to monitor and control behavior effectively, individuals must act on their knowledge. It is not enough to know about behavior; action must be taken to control it. Both Colonel Forster and Madame Beck are aware of their charges' relationships, but do not act in order to prevent the elopements. Elizabeth correctly conjectures that the Forsters "must have seen [Lydia and Wickham] together for ever," but Colonel Forster did not notice any behavior "to give him any alarm" (298). He witnessed the progress of the relationship between Lydia and Wickham, but did not take it seriously. His misjudgment permits the breach of security that allows Lydia to elope. Lucy Snowe tells Madame Beck of the relationship between Ginevra and de Hamal, and discovers that "Madame Beck was perfectly au fait to that affair. She had long discussed it with Mrs Cholmondeley, and laid her own responsibility, in the business, on that lady's shoulders" (522). Like Colonel Forster, Madame Beck observes the relationship between the lover and the girl she should be monitoring, but does nothing to curb the progress of the

relationship. Madame Beck even passes the responsibility for so doing on to someone else, who lacks her opportunities to observe Ginevra's behavior. By willfully giving up her responsibility and thus refusing to act, Madame Beck facilitates Ginevra's elopement with de Hamal. The system of surveillance depends on individual monitoring and controlling behavior, and when these individuals fail to act on their knowledge of behavior, the system fails.

These failures of the public eye's ability to control private behavior pass from private to public knowledge almost immediately. Elizabeth wonders if there is "a servant belonging to [Longbourn], who did not know the whole story before the end of the day" (300). This distribution of knowledge among the working class, even though generally considered part of "the family," points out the stratified nature of surveillance. It is the position of the aristocracy and upper middle class (who mimicked the aristocracy) to monitor behavior, and the position of the working class (and lower middle class) to be monitored. The failure of the higher levels of society to adequately control the actions of individuals leads to a reversal of the class roles; in *Pride and Prejudice* the lower class observes the upper, and the Bennets are uncomfortable with being monitored by their social inferiors. This reversal calls the legitimacy the construction of their social system into question.

Madame Beck is also made uncomfortable by the public knowledge of her failure to prevent an elopement. Lucy identifies the publicity of the affair as "damage done to her interest" (522). Madame Beck relies on her good reputation to keep her school in business; without her reputation, she is in danger of losing her opportunities to support herself financially. Class differences come into play here as well as in *Pride and Prejudice*. As the director of a school, Madame Beck is in a peculiar position; she must both observe the aristocracy as represented by her students and be subject to the observation of the aristocracy as represented by the parents of

her students. Madame Beck's failure to properly monitor Ginevra clarifies the problems with this system; in order to protect herself, Madame Beck must prevent those who are observing her from discovering her own failure to observe. One lapse in surveillance necessarily leads to others so that the system can be perpetuated.

The fear of public display in the two novels demonstrates the success of society's system of surveillance. Austen focuses the fear of display on the conduct of the Bennets at the Netherfield ball, while Brontë centers her discussion on Lucy's pink dress. Elizabeth has to endure the publicity of her family's inappropriate behavior at the Netherfield ball. She thinks that "had her family made an agreement to expose themselves as much as they could during the evening, it would have been impossible for them to play their parts with more spirit, or finer success" (133). When considered collectively, the conduct of the Bennet family is too embarrassing for Elizabeth to express her feelings in any other way than sarcastically. When taken individually, Elizabeth is being constantly vexed and ashamed. Mrs. Bennet insists on discussing her plans for Jane's future with Mr. Bingley in an "intelligible tone" that makes Elizabeth blush "with shame and vexation" (131). Elizabeth also tries to make Mary less enthusiastic about singing and playing for the group, but "such an opportunity of exhibiting was delightful to her" (132). Mary loves being able to display her accomplishments, but this thirst for public display is contrary to the accepted code of behavior for young women in their society. Elizabeth looks to her father to preserve Mary's propriety, but his loud comment does more harm than good, putting his social awkwardness on display as well as Mary's (132). Elizabeth's family is nearly always a source of embarrassment for her because of their behavior in public. This embarrassment carries with it a note of desperation, because it threatens her ability to form a socially appropriate sexual relationship through marriage.

Mr. Darcy shares Elizabeth's shame with respect to her family's actions. When he tells her of his reservations about Mr. Bingley's proposed marriage to Jane, he reminds her of "that total want of propriety so frequently, so almost uniformly betrayed by [Mrs. Bennet], by your three younger sisters, and occasionally even by your father" (218). This refusal to develop the social graces is his principal justification for separating Jane and Mr. Bingley, as well as for his reluctance to propose to Elizabeth. The indifference to society and its norms makes the Bennet family "a most unhappy connection" (218). Their willingness to call attention to themselves is one of the most severe faults possible in a community dedicated to surveillance. The surveillante society values those who blend in, not those who draw the eye. Elizabeth reminds her father of the contagious nature of public display when she warns him about Lydia's potential behavior at Brighton: "can you suppose it possible that [Kitty and Lydia] will not be censured and despised wherever they are known, and that their sisters will not be often involved in the disgrace?" (246). The unrestrained actions of Lydia reflect poorly on the entire family; Jane and Elizabeth are expected to be sexually promiscuous as well.

Despite their mutual embarrassment at her family, Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth are drawn closer together by their reactions to the other Bennets. Joan Manheimer demonstrates the manner in which Mrs. Bennet "facilitates the unions she is feared to endanger" by acting as a foil for her decorous daughters Jane and Elizabeth (208). In her outrageous behavior, Mrs. Bennet makes Jane and Elizabeth look even more prim and demure than they actually are. This comment can be extended to the entire Bennet family. Mr. Darcy remarks on not only Mrs. Bennet, but her husband and younger daughters as well. He praises Jane and Elizabeth for "hav[ing] conducted yourselves so as to avoid any share of the like censure" (218). Elizabeth and Jane appear to advantage for having such a ridiculous family, and Mr. Darcy praises their

adherence to the social code of behavior when surrounded by such bad examples.

Lucy Snowe demonstrates her fear of public display through her response to the pink dress her godmother chooses for her. Her first reaction is to think that "no human force should avail to put me into it. A pink dress!" (231). She is so shocked by the bright color, so different from the grays she normally appears in, that she initially plans to refuse wearing it. She is haunted by a "sense of shame and fear of ridicule" (232). After Graham approves of it, however, she realizes that "the dress was made with extreme simplicity, guiltless of flounce or furbelow; it was but the light fabric and bright tint which scared me" (232). Like Elizabeth in the aftermath of Lydia's elopement, Lucy has an acute sense of how others will perceive her, and she is quick to assume people will think the worst of her. Lucy is so afraid of appearing in public wearing a pink dress that she is blind to its "extreme simplicity" until after she wins Graham's approval. Lucy thinks that by appearing in a pink dress she will seem presumptuous, playing the part of someone more wealthy and popular than she actually is. She feels keenly the "jar of discord" of seeing herself in a bright pink dress, but no one else seems to remark on the incongruity (234). Only Lucy thinks of herself as barred from normal society; most people neither notice nor care about her pink dress, even those who know her. As Graham tells her, "these crowding burghers are no respecters of persons" (247). The community does not see Lucy as an exception to any social rules; a pink dress on any other girl is no different from a pink dress on Lucy Snowe—or rather, Lucy Snowe can wear the same pink dress as any other girl without exciting comment. Her self-consciousness is the only thing that makes the dress inappropriate.

There is a single exception to the communal indifference, though. Lucy catches M. Paul "looking at me gravely and intently: at me, or rather, at my pink dress" (247). M. Paul sees the dress as an expression of Lucy's untamed nature, comprising sexuality, spirituality, and intellect,

all of which needs to be controlled. M. Paul recognizes the stark contrast between Lucy's normally self-effacing attire and the pink dress, and sharply makes Lucy feel the difference. In a later conversation her refers to her "*scarlet gown*" and classifies both pink and red as "flaunting, giddy colours" (369, Brontë's emphasis). M. Paul understands the incongruity of a pink dress on Lucy Snowe as only Lucy herself can. He tells her that "he had no intention to deny it the merit of *looking* rather well," but he is concerned with the emotional import of such a dress (370). M. Paul is the only one to notice that the bright pink is totally out of sync with her sexually repressed personality. M. Paul's comments strike a chord within Lucy's conscience, as she insists on the pinkness of the dress (as opposed to his calling it scarlet) in a tone "at once indignant and horror-struck" (369). Lucy denies M. Paul's implication that she is becoming self-assured enough to wear bright colors in public voluntarily. M. Paul's use of the word scarlet (as opposed to any other shade of red, or the pale pink the dress actually is) shows his especial distrust of this form of public display: wearing bright colors is one step away from becoming a fallen woman.

M. Paul's reaction to the dress is one of the things that bring him and Lucy together, much like Mr. Darcy's reaction to the contrast between Elizabeth's appropriate behavior and her family's unacceptable conduct. As Lucy ponders his disapproval, she tells herself, "You are well habituated to be passed by as a shadow in Life's sunshine: it is a new thing to see one testily lifting his hand to screen his eyes, because you tease him with an obtrusive ray" (371). Lucy is accustomed to being ignored, or seen as a dim foil for someone else's splendor, either Ginevra's, Polly's, or Madame Beck's. M. Paul seems to be the only character in the book who can recognize her potential for sexual expression, and despite his brusque attitude, Lucy is charmed by the idea of someone who sees her as shining with her own light. Even though Lucy is afraid

of the public display, she is pleased that someone notices it, and agrees with her opinion of the signals sent by the wearing of the dress.

Neither Lucy nor Elizabeth can completely avoid censure; eventually, they both openly defy those who would insist on observing their behavior and controlling their sexual options. Elizabeth tells Lady Catherine that she "do[es] not pretend to possess equal frankness with your ladyship. *You* may ask questions, which *I* shall not choose to answer" (355). Elizabeth frankly refuses to submit to Lady Catherine's surveillance. She goes on to say, "How far your nephew might approve of your interference in *his* affairs, I cannot tell; but you have certainly no right to concern yourself in mine" (358). Elizabeth recognizes the power that knowledge can give, and objects to Lady Catherine obtaining the power to act against her and her relationship with Mr. Darcy. Despite Elizabeth's evasions, Lady Catherine gains the knowledge she needs to act; however, her actions have the opposite effect to what she intends. Mr. Darcy tells Elizabeth that Lady Catherine's "intelligence had given me hope" of a future with Elizabeth (379). Lady Catherine's surveillance brings Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy together instead of driving them apart.

Lucy also rebels against her surveillante. When Lucy refuses to go to bed, Madame Beck tells her that "I must send another to watch you," and Lucy responds with, "I forbid it. Let me alone. Keep your hand off me, and my life, and my troubles" (494). Lucy denies Madame Beck's right to monitor her, and insists on being left alone. Lucy recognizes the connection between Madame Beck's surveillance and the action she takes based on her observations, as Lucy asks her to take not her eyes, but her hand off of her. Madame Beck's observation is a form of control, as noted by Margaret L. Shaw, but Lucy does not react for the reasons Shaw assigns to her. Shaw argues that Lucy only resents Madame Beck's surveillance when she has something to hide, but at this point Madame Beck already knows about Lucy's feelings for M.

Paul. Lucy rebels against the control over her life, however, not the threat of exposure. Madame Beck responds to Lucy's outburst with, "You must not marry Paul. He cannot marry" (494). Madame Beck describes her interference as applying specifically to the control over sexual activity. Like Lady Catherine, Madame Beck seeks to control the sexual authority of her male relative by attacking his chosen partner. Lucy's rebellion does not lead in a direct line to her sexual fulfillment, as Elizabeth's does, but it does give her a victory over Madame Beck, who is finally unable to prevent M. Paul's relationship with Lucy.

Emma shares with *Pride and Prejudice* its concern with display; however, Austen's focus has shifted the fear of display from large crowd scenes to more intimate settings. Instead of referring to the community as a single entity, society in Highbury is always a compendium of individuals. Thus, the emphasis is on Emma's discomfort with displays of feeling in private rather than public settings. Emma, however, instead of being a victim of surveillance, becomes one of its agents, seeking to control the emotions displayed by the people around her. When John Knightley complains about going to the Westons' party, Emma "could not be complying, she dreaded being quarrelsome; her heroism reached only to silence" (90). Emma can neither agree nor disagree with her brother-in-law. She actually wants to go to the Westons', but to disagree would be to provoke his anger, just as her father provokes his anger by questioning his health and his vacation to the sea (83, 85). Emma tries to prevent John's displays of irritation throughout his visits, but never quite succeeds.

Emma also studiously avoids the embarrassment that would come upon both Jane Fairfax and herself from the exposure of her idea about the affair with Mr. Dixon. When Frank gives her the word Dixon during the alphabet game, Mr. Knightley sees that Emma "judged it proper to appear to censure" the word (274). Emma disapproves of Frank's alluding to her suspicions so

openly, even though only among a few friends. When Frank passes the word to Jane, she "looked up, and seeing herself watched, blushed more deeply than [Mr. Knightley] had ever perceived her" (274). Though only a slight display of feeling, Emma seeks to avoid it, as well as the exposure of her story about Jane and Mr. Dixon that an explanation would involve. Emma works to make everyone comfortable in social situations in order to control displays of anger or embarrassment.

Emma is also uncomfortable with displays of positive feeling, much like Elizabeth's distaste for her sisters' boisterousness. After Emma rejects Mr. Elton and while they are still in the carriage together, "their straightforward emotions left no room for the little zigzags of embarrassment" (105). Emma and Mr. Elton have shared their true feelings, and neither of them is pleased with the conversation. Emma prefers to live her life within the "little zigzags" of feelings that remain unspoken. This space of controlled emotions is confined, but it is also safe. As long as she operates within this space, Emma does not have to face unpleasant truths about herself, her plots, or her friends. While Emma continues to act as a force of social control, she does not need to worry about others controlling her.

Lucy Snowe is also uncomfortable with displays of emotion, even when they take place in relative privacy. When Polly's father leaves and she begins to cry with her nurse, Lucy "roused myself and started up, to check this scene while it was yet within bounds" (13). Lucy is anxious to prevent Polly's display of grief from becoming excessive—or even to prevent her from displaying her grief at all. While it may be conjectured that Lucy's discomfort comes from an inability to share Polly's emotion, there is a similar scene later in the novel in which Lucy does share the pain of separation and is still uncomfortable with the display of that pain. When M. Paul's departure from the school is announced, Lucy feels the pain of his loss even more than

her students do; yet, she feels "a sentiment of impatience towards the pupils who sobbed. […] I could not do with their tears, or that gasping sound; I could not bear it" (485-486). Even with grief Lucy can participate in, she cannot bear the sobs of her students. It is the display itself that Lucy finds intolerable, not the emotions it expresses. She thus wields the power of social control, even while Madame Beck and M. Paul wield that power over her.

Because she has these observers spying on her, Lucy is also careful not to display her own emotions, even in private communications. When Graham asks her why his letter is so important to her, she thinks, "I prized it like the blood in my veins. I only answered that I had so few letters to care for" (275). Lucy places an extraordinary value on his letter, not simply because she seldom receives any, but because it comes from him. Lucy, however, is not prepared to reveal her feelings for Graham at this point, so she evades the display of her emotions with an excuse. Lucy's behavior operates on the same principle when she responds to his letters. She first writes a response with feeling, expressing "a strongly-adherent affection, a rooted and active gratitude […] a closely-clinging and deeply-honouring attachment," then destroys it and writes "a terse, curt missive" (282). Lucy will not allow her feelings to be displayed, not even in the privacy of a letter. She realizes that not even her letters are private as the monitoring forces of the pensionnat turn their attention to the correspondence she treasures so much. Madame Beck reads her letters from Graham, which Lucy considers to be "not pleasant, but might be borne" (326). Lucy trusts Madame Beck's discretion, and knows that any secrets will be safe with her. Lucy's apprehension comes from M. Paul. The thought of his reading them "jarred [Lucy's] very soul" (327). Lucy cannot bear the idea that M. Paul has access to her private correspondence, so she vows to bury it and thus place it out of the reach of any observer. Lucy's fear of exposure places her letters out of her own reach as well. She guards her own

emotions so closely that she will not allow herself to indulge in the happiness of rereading the letters or to express the pain of losing them.

Like Lucy, Jane Fairfax hides her emotions as well as she can. At her first appearance in the novel, Emma sees that "Wrapt up in a cloak of politeness, she seemed determined to hazard nothing. She was disgustingly, was suspiciously reserved" (132). Jane refuses to express her emotions to Emma, and for this Emma becomes angry with her. Emma seems to only be uncomfortable with emotions directed at herself and her friends. Since she has yet to meet Frank Churchill or Mr. Dixon, she is careless of the way in which Jane's emotions might relate to them. Also, because of their lifelong rivalry, Emma is anxious to see Jane break the rules of society that govern the expression of feeling. Emma accuses her of reserve, which becomes the key term for her character, as Frank and Mr. Knightley agree that this flaw counterbalances her other character traits (157, 160, 225). None of the other characters admires her restraint. When Jane's determination to keep her thoughts and feelings to herself leads her to exclaim, "Oh! Miss Woodhouse, the comfort of being sometimes alone!", Emma begins to value her for the first time—because of her outburst, not because of the strength of feeling she can conceal (285). Jane longs to be alone so that she can be free from the presence of people, which demands her emotional restraint. Like Lucy, she refuses to perform her emotions for anyone else.

Lucy and Jane also share their socioeconomic position. Placed on the frontier between class boundaries, they are in the unfortunate position of having to teach people who consider themselves their betters. Jane is considered an equal in Highbury because the community responds to her family connections, but Mrs. Elton only sees her as a governess, a woman who must work for her living and therefore her social inferior. Jane concludes the novel, however, on a higher level than Mrs. Elton because her husband Frank Churchill is wealthier than Mr. Elton.

Lucy has a career teaching, but she also has the ability to mix in society with Ginevra Fanshawe. Ginevra is so amazed at Lucy's social mobility that she asks, "Who *are* you?" and Lucy responds with "Perhaps a personage in disguise" (341, Brontë's emphasis). Ginevra's question reveals the socially constructed nature of the identity she is trying to understand—Lucy meets Ginevra when she is unemployed and unknown by anyone, and she rises to an equal station with her. Lucy jokes that she may be even higher on the socioeconomic scale than Ginevra. Both Lucy and Jane live on the borders of the socially constructed world they live in, and their in-between position allows them a degree of mobility unknown to the other characters.

While Jane Fairfax hides her emotions from the community through her famous reserve, Frank Churchill avoids society's surveillance through a contrary performance of excessive openness. Instead of acting shy in company, he is outgoing and charismatic. When the secret of his engagement to Jane Fairfax is revealed, Emma asks, "What right had he to come among us with affection and faith engaged, and with manners so *very* disengaged?" (312). She goes on to exclaim, "What has it been but a system of hypocrisy and deceit,—espionage, and treachery?" (314). Emma accuses Frank of being too open, as well as being not open enough—he flirts openly with Emma in order to throw people off the track of his relationship with Jane. He tells Emma that he is glad she told him of her suspicion about Jane and Mr. Dixon, because it gives him another way to camouflage his relationship with Jane (191). The reason for escaping public notice returns to the idea of sexual choice. Frank counterfeits a sexual interest, both for himself and for Jane, so that their engagement will not be discovered. Like the elopements in *Pride and Prejudice* and *Villette*, this secrecy is seen as a rejection of the rules of society. In referring to the secret engagement, Joyce Quiring Erickson makes the point that "The public 'right to know' is based on the understanding that a marriage has public and social consequences" (208). By

depriving the community of the knowledge of their engagement, Frank and Jane deny the normal social consequences of preparing for marriage. They defy society's conventions, challenging the basis of society's "right to know," and thus its right to interfere.

Colonel de Hamal also disguises himself in order to escape the surveillance network. He dresses as the ghost of a nun in order to meet secretly with Ginevra (523-524). His costume keeps Lucy and M. Paul from recognizing him, and keeps Dr. John from recognizing his existence. Instead of hiding his relationship behind conversation as Frank does, de Hamal literally runs away from those who would unmask him. His disguise relies on physical rather than social realities, rendering it somewhat less sophisticated than Frank's, but even more effective.

Brontë shares Austen's concern with women's ability to choose in sexual matters. Both authors present a society obsessed with monitoring behavior in order to control individuals, as well as the few who escape society's all-seeing eye. According to both authors, however, there are two methods of defying surveillance, and only one of them is good. Elopements like Lydia's and Ginevra's are not acceptable, whether to the society or the author; the only acceptable way to defy surveillance is to deny the right of society to control the individual. Austen rehabilitates her defiant characters, reintegrating Elizabeth Bennet and Jane Fairfax into their communities. Brontë, however, concludes both *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* with the heroines creating their own societies. Thus Austen works to change the community from the inside, while Brontë's novels present an anarchic desire to destroy society and start over. Though their methods of reforming society are different, the impulse is identical.

Although Brontë abused Austen in her letters, her novels betray a certain respect for Austen's ideas. The two authors were working at different social moments, but they expressed

surprisingly similar attitudes toward nature, women's roles, and women's right to sexual choice. Brontë contradicts her attacks on Austen with her own published novels; she could not escape the influence of Austen's novels.

Brontë carefully formulated her public appearance, even in a medium as private as personal correspondence. She wrote to Lewes and Williams as Currer Bell, the individualistic author of *Jane Eyre* and *Shirley*. While this persona was derived from aspects of her personality, it can be seen as a deliberate performance of literary singularity. Brontë was able to absorb Austen's influence without admitting it, forging a new place in literature for herself out of the existing traditions.

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