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PERFORMING THE SELF _IN CAMERA_: CHARLOTTE BRONTË, THE _CAMERA OBSCURA_ AND THE PROTOCOLS OF FEMALE SELF-ENACTMENT

by

Ulrike Walker

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

at

Dalhousie University
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September, 1997

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This thesis is dedicated to
my mother, Gertrud Hainle,
and to the memory
of my father,
Felix Hainle

Table of Contents

List of Illustrations.................................... vi

Abstract.. vii

List of Abbreviations.................................... viii

General Introduction..................................... 1

Chapter

I The Camera Obscura and Brontë's Romantic Aesthetic.................................. 16

Methodology.. 16

Preliminary Intersections............................ 27

1) The Camera Obscura as Apparatus............. 27
2) The Camera Obscura as Paradigm.............. 39
3) The Romantic Camera Obscura................. 65
4) The Camera Obscura and the Sublime.......... 79
5) Closeting the Body: Realism, Materialism and the Subject In Camera....... 93

II The Theatre of the Eye/I: Brontë and the Gendered Protocols of Subjectivity................ 114

1) Theatre, Visual Art and Narrative: Brontë's Intersections..................... 119
2) The Audience in the Image and the Gendered Art of Realization............... 134
3) Gender and the Protocols of Self-Enactment............................. 154

III Satirizing Genius: Male Sublimity and Female Accomplishment in Brontë's Juvenilia............. 177

IV Lockean Enclosures: Perception, Profession and Gender in The Professor..................... 221

V Metamorphosis In Camera: Jane Eyre and the Theatrics of Selfhood........................ 294

VI "Lucy is a tatterbox!": The Anti-Ontological Theatrics of Villette 377

Epilogue and Conclusion 439

Endnotes... 448

Works Cited.. 468

List of Illustrations

Figure 1. Edinburgh Observatory _camera obscura_....... 30

Figure 2. Room _camera obscura_......................... 31

Figure 3. Office _camera obscura_....................... 32

Figure 4. _Camera obscura_ at Brighton.................. 33

Figure 5. Sedan chair _camera obscura_.................. 34

Figure 6. Tent _camera obscura_......................... 35

Figure 7. Pocket _camera obscura_....................... 35

Figure 8. Comparison of eye and _camera obscura_ from René Descartes's _La Dioptrique_.............. 42

Figure 9. Comparison of eye and various _camera obscurae_.................................. 43

Figure 10. _Camera obscura_/study....................... 58

Figure 11. _Belshazzar's Feast_ by John Martin............ 86

Abstract

In this thesis I discuss how Brontë's work engages the gendered protocols of perception, cognition and representation in nineteenth-century discourse. I argue that Brontë's narratives can be positioned as knowing interventions in a masculine discourse that drew its authority from rationalist and empirical models of mind, particularly the camera obscura which was one of the most important models for the representation of vision and subjectivity. Following Jonathan Crary's Techniques of the Observer, I construct the camera obscura as a metaphor and technology intersecting a range of cultural activities that determine the construction and empowerment of the subject. Applying Crary's Foucaultian approach to issues of gender, I present the camera obscura as the paradigmatic "space" against and within which the protocols of female self-representation are inscribed in Brontë's work.

After a discussion of my methodology, I provide a history of the camera obscura as an apparatus and as a metaphor of mind, noting its influence in the nineteenth century and on Brontë (Ch.I). I then describe how the subjective and self-reflective nature of the camera obscura is appropriated by Brontë to register the subversive theatricality of the female subject (Ch.II). Focusing on the gendering of genius, I demonstrate how Brontë's early work satirized conventions of female creativity (Ch.III). I then discuss the development of the theatrical female subject in The Professor (Ch.IV), Jane Eyre (Ch.V) and Villette (Ch.VI) and describe how this subject first emerges on the margins of Crimsworth's male narrative, becomes central to Jane Eyre, and finally culminates in the evasions and ruptures of Villette where the "heresy" of female theatrics is most fully explored.

Abbreviations

SHLL: Wise, T.J. and Symington, J.A. eds. The Brontës:Their Lives, Friendships and Correspondence in Four Volumes. Oxford: The Shakespeare Head Press, 1933. Reprinted in two volumes, 1988.

EEW: Brontë, Charlotte. An Edition of the Early Writings of Charlotte Brontë. Ed. Christine Alexander. 3 vols. Oxford: Basil Blackwell for the Shakespeare Head Press, 1987-

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General Introduction

This thesis explores how Brontë's work inflects, in terms of gender, the protocols of perception, cognition and representation that informed nineteenth-century aesthetics. Although it has been established that Brontë's writing was significantly affected by her interest in visual art, I argue that Brontë's aesthetic sophistication involved more than the artistic activity documented and analyzed by Brontë scholars such as Christine Alexander. As I hope to demonstrate, Brontë's narratives can be positioned, not just as literary works modified by visual culture, but as knowing interventions in a masculine aesthetic discourse that aligned itself with and drew its authority from rationalist and empirical models of mind developed during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As Brontë's work attests, aesthetics and epistemology were inextricably linked as part of the cultural/social discourse in which the politics of female self-representation were embedded.

In the epistemology which informs Brontë's work, certain paradigms resonate. I trace, in particular, the impact of the camera obscura which, as Jonathan Crary states in his influential study, Techniques of the Observer, "was the most widely used model for explaining human vision and for representing the relation of a perceiver and the position of a knowing subject to an

external world" (27). According to Crary, the camera's influence as a model of perception and cognition was pervasive during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries but was significantly compromised by the early nineteenth century when new paradigms of vision were shaped by the non-Cartesian optics of instruments such as the stereoscope and the kaleidoscope. Although I do not wish to deny the importance of Crary's discussion and the significance of his insights, I do not accept Crary's thesis that the camera obscura was no longer operative as a dominant metaphor in the nineteenth century. As I will argue in the following chapter, the camera obscura remained influential in the nineteenth century both as a metaphor and a technology. Powerfully implicit in the development of photography and its analogues, the camera obscura itself was also visible as a popular cultural artifact. Although, as a metaphor of mind, it was put under increasing pressure, the camera obscura was never totally effaced as Crary would like to have it, but remained present as a resonant problematic within and against which the gendered politics of representation were negotiated and articulated.

For this reason, I embed Brontë's narratives in a cultural discourse whose investment in the model of the camera obscura I see as complex and problematic but highly significant. Like Crary, I construct the camera as a metaphor and a technology that informs and is informed by a

range of cultural activities which have to do with the construction and empowerment of the subject. However, using Michel Foucault's concept of the diagram I argue that the camera obscura retained its diagrammatic power in the nineteenth-century and significantly influenced the cultural discourse of that period. Extending this Foucaultian approach to apply to gender, I present the camera as a diagrammatic field against and within which the protocols of female self-representation are enacted.

Whereas studies like Crary's focus on the regulatory rationalism of the camera obscura, I incorporate the paradoxical nature of its figuration, particularly its propensity for accommodating transgressive "behaviours" that challenge those rationalizations on which the power of the masculine subject is based. Using Locke's enormously influential figuration of the mind as a camera obscura as the nodal point of my discussion, I trace its ramifications in Brontë's aesthetic practice, focusing particularly on her resistance to and revisions of the Lockean subject. In her deployment of the Lockean concept of the self-as-camera Brontë achieves her most richly heretical effects with regard to the representation of the female subject. The camera's paradoxical capacity to figure resistance to its own regimes makes it possible for Brontë to structure the female subject as a complexity that both inhabits and defies the containments imposed by those regimes.

In contextualizing the camera obscura as part of the cultural discourse of the nineteenth century, I also take into account the Romantic revisions of the rationalist/empiricist tradition epitomized by Locke. Referring to Romantic theorists and poets, particularly to Samuel T. Coleridge who employs the camera obscura as a complex metaphor in Biographia Literaria, I trace their critiques of Lockean paradigms. As part of my endeavour to inscribe the camera as a persistently operative metaphor and technology, I describe its infiltration into Romantic aesthetic discourse and practice. Although the shift from the epistemology of the Enlightenment to Romantic theories of the relationships among perception, cognition and representation has been well documented in M. H. Abrams's definitive study, The Mirror and the Lamp, the Romantic revision of Lockean paradigms has not been thoroughly discussed in terms of gender. Brontë's own rewriting of Romanticism has been the focus of studies concerned with gender issues,[1] but, apart from Michael Kearns's rather unsatisfactory discussion of Brontë in his otherwise impressive Metaphors of Mind in Fiction and Psychology, these studies do not specifically trace the modulations of Enlightenment and Romantic cognitive paradigms that I see in her work.

More gender-directed discussion of Brontë's works has occurred around issues of realism in the novel which, as a

genre of female aesthetic expression, has been acknowledged as a form that addresses issues of female subjectivity in the context of social experience. Certainly Brontë has been placed as a central practitioner of this form.[2] However, interest has not been specifically directed at Brontë's complex appropriations of Romantic and Enlightenment paradigms of mind and their roles as constructive features in her novels. Because she has been seen for so long as an intuitive rather than an informed and intellectual novelist, critics, until recently, have been reluctant to assign her the capacity for such appropriations. By insisting on Brontë's critical awareness of the social, cultural and philosophical constructs she inherited, I position her as a writer who constructs the real, and the female subject's place within that reality, as a complex intersection of epistemological and aesthetic issues that intersect at the paradigmatic site of the _camera obscura_.

Aware of her own investment in the paradigms she appropriates and challenges, Brontë constructs the female subject simultaneously from within and without as a being _in camera_ who must paradoxically challenge her own ontology. Positioned on this paradoxical "ground," Brontë's work, at the level of both form and content, reflects the adaptations and resistances of a female subject who must articulate and exert herself within the

confines of a disempowering masculine epistemology. Concerned as she is with the construction of the narrated and narrating female subject, Brontë deploys this dynamic of adaptation and resistance as a means of challenging the epistemological assumptions implicit in the structure of narrative authority, a structure that is, of course, highly gendered.

While I make some reference to the social conditions in which Brontë was working, I am mainly concerned with her construction of the female subject within the context of the paradigms of perception and cognition that endorsed the patriarchal culture of the nineteenth century. In my discussion of bourgeois materialism in Chapter I and in my analysis of _Villette_, I do engage the issue of "ownership" as it emerges in the bourgeois construction of the female object. However, I do not specifically address the issue of class in the construction of the female subject. In my analysis of the _camera obscura_, I assume that the regime under which Brontë and her female characters operate is informed by a middle-class economy of male and female subjectivity. Women, in my discussion, operate primarily within and against the constraints of a male-oriented bourgeois society that naturalizes the domestication and commodification of women.

As I explore Brontë's developing engagement with the ontology and epistemology of female subjectivity, I trace

her progressively complex handling of issues implicit in the metaphorology of the camera. In Chapter III, which deals with the early writings, I demonstrate how Brontë's satirical mode undermines assumptions concerning female genius. After outlining gendered concepts of genius in relation to the sublime, I demonstrate how Brontë's early work challenges notions of male sublimity that are validated by the camera/mind of masculine Romanticism.

I suggest that The Professor, which is narrated by a male persona, is structured around Lockean paradigms, particularly the camera obscura, which are related to the affirmation of masculine authority. With its emphasis on enclosure and self-restraint, Crimsworth's narrative invests heavily in the idea of the camera as a site of control of both self and world. Drawing on Crary's analysis of the camera obscura as a paradigm for the policing of perception and cognition, I interpret Crimsworth's narrative as an attempt to assert narrative authority through strategies of containment. In his desire to construct himself as a magisterial Cartesian observer, Crimsworth engages in a programme of conceptual enchamberment designed to define him as a subject over against a subordinate female otherness. Underwritten by the dualism and visual bias of Lockean cognition, Crimsworth's narrative draws on the authority of the eye as the perceptual framework that defines the cognitive field

of the empowered male subject.

In The Professor, Brontë's challenge to Crimsworth's assumption of authority is to ironize his magisterial framework by creating an obliquely rendered female subject, Frances Henri, on the margins of his narrative. Expanding on Annette Tromly's insightful interpretation of The Professor, I explore how Brontë illuminates the "blind spots" in Crimsworth's authoritative perspective by developing a second, ironizing frame of reference that refers to the obscured subjectivity of the female other. I argue that, by illuminating the "object" of Crimsworth's self-empowering strategies, Brontë ironically exposes the dynamic whereby the female subject is disempowered in the self-structuring narrative of masculinity. Paradoxically, it is by means of such illuminations of the dynamic of disempowerment that the female subject is brought to light and enabled to intervene in a narrative devoted to male mastery.

In my interpretation of this subversive female subtext which "frames" Crimsworth's Lockean text of mastery, I refer to the more illicit aspects of the camera, particularly its capacity to figure metamorphosis. Repressed in rationalist accounts of the camera, the metamorphosing activities of the mind--its capacity to create non-rational, imaginative "realities"--without reference to a rationally-ordered subject/object

relationship--have always threatened the integrity of the camera image and its claim to perceptual/cognitive authority. In The Professor, such disintegrating metamorphoses are associated with the female subject whose mutability escapes and subverts the containments Crimsworth's rationalist narrative attempts to impose.

With its ironic treatment of masculine aesthetic and epistemological discourse, The Professor is a far more sophisticated and heretical novel--especially in terms of gender construction--than most critics recognize.[3] Yet The Professor's ironic female perspective, because it is directed from the margins of a central male consciousness, can only act from outside the boundaries of the main narrative structure. While such irony successfully subverts Crimsworth's masculine, Lockean postures, it does not fully address the problem of female self-articulation within the same aesthetic and epistemological power structures with which Crimsworth aligns himself.

To some extent, Brontë solves this problem in Jane Eyre by bringing the marginalized female consciousness to the centre of the work. By employing a female narrator to address the gendered protocols of narrative, Brontë engages more directly the dynamic of adaptation and resistance through which the female subject is negotiated within the framework of masculine authority. In Jane Eyre, which I consider to be a transitional novel, Brontë constructs

authoritative Lockean paradigms as capable of transition or transmutation in the service of female subjectivity. While acknowledging the camera as a site of social, aesthetic and cognitive power, Brontë invests it with an ambiguity that allows it to function simultaneously as a site of female transgression.

In The Professor, Brontë develops the idea of the mutability of the female subject. In Jane Eyre she connects these female metamorphoses to the idea of theatre and reconstructs the camera as a paradoxical site where subjectivity and the performance of subjectivity are interactive. In this strategically ambiguous space, it becomes possible to express subjectivity virtually and to acknowledge the "reality" of that virtuality as it operates within the structures of Lockean hegemony. In this interfacial camera, spectrality and specularity become enactments of a theatrical female subject whose virtual metamorphoses progressively undo the ontological integrity of the male subject. I focus on the window-seat in Jane Eyre as a paradigmatic double enclosure that is simultaneously central and liminal. Contained within the rigid geometry of an architecture that refers to Lockean cognitive space, the window-seat appears as an interfacial camera, a permeable containment where the rigid structures of masculine authority and the labile metamorphoses of feminine subjectivity intersect and interact.

By following Jane's "progress" from Gateshead to Ferndean, and the male/female interactions that these places exemplify, I trace Brontë's construction of Jane's narrative as a development from a dynamic of resistance to a dynamic of adaptation and appropriation. In the process of this shift, the functions of eye and mind are transmuted from a defensive, antagonistic interplay of male and female vision to an increasingly self-affirming appropriation of vision. Vision becomes an interactive, visionary theatrics whereby female subjectivity not only asserts its presence but also permeates and appropriates the authoritative space of the camera.

In Jane Eyre, I see Brontë moving towards a female-oriented symbiosis of masculine and feminine "spaces" of cognition with the window-seat as the figural site of this interaction. In Villette, her masterwork, Brontë embarks on a far more heretical narrative in which the camera becomes the site of a disintegrative consciousness that has moved from symbiosis to a radically virtualized concept of the subject. Shaped by the narrative heresies of Lucy Snowe, Villette represents the construction of a female subject whose subjectivity is deliberately rendered as non-entical in the sense that it has no "substance" beyond its metamorphosing "presence" in the structure of the novel. The intensely surreal atmosphere of Villette, represents a deliberate shifting of subject/object relations from the

stabilizing figurations of the Lockean _camera_, to a figuration of enclosure in which the relationship between subject and object is rendered in terms of the spectral and the specular. In this radical absence of ontological and epistemological integrity, the _camera_ functions as a site of rupture and displacement where the Lockean subject, alienated within the power structure of its own paradigms, appears as a virtuality no more authoritatively "grounded" than the non-entical self-enactments of the female self.

By estranging the "real" in the context of the virtual, Lucy's narrative disengages itself from the naturalizations of bourgeois realism and aligns itself instead with a knowingly theatrical "reality." In place of the subject/object policings of the Lockean _camera_, _Villette_ proposes a radical dissolution of the subject whereby the _camera_ becomes the space of a selfhood that favours the disintegrative metamorphoses of theatre. Here, the virtuality of theatre, which creates its effects entirely _in camera_, is the figuring and figurative site of a "reality" which is manifested, not in the stabilized duality of a subject over against an externally perceived object, but as an interiorized inter-dynamic of spectrality, specularity and self-performance.

As the title implies, enclosure in _Villette_ aligns the parameters of female being with the "small town" precincts of bourgeois life.[4] This overlapping suggests

that the ontology of the female subject is no longer on the outskirts of the novel, so to speak, but presented as the constitutive framework within which the social, aesthetic and epistemological territory of the narrative is constructed. In _Villette_, the _camera_ becomes the site of a polylogue always interfaced by the virtual/theatrical metamorphoses of female subjectivity. Informed by an awareness of the epistemological and aesthetic enclosures it occupies, Lucy's narrative disrupts and resists, through its gaps, wilful manipulations and prevarications, the reinscription of the Lockean paradigms it inhabits.

Always gesturing, by means of its narrative unconformities, towards the virtuality of its own construction, _Villette_ is designed to enact, _in camera_, the undoing of the _camera_'s claim to an epistemological and ontological authority that assigns a constitutive subjecthood to men and a self-effacing objecthood to women. In the process, Lucy creates a narrative of enchamberment that does not realign itself with gendered protocols of Lockean perception and cognition, as Crimsworth's does. Instead, her narrative projects itself, through its theatrics of innerness, towards a prophetic female selfhood that remains recalcitrantly unrealized and unrealizable. Evident in Vashti, the "unknown planet," and in Lucy's "zealot" eruptions, this prophetic being, allied with female genius, appears always ineffably and disruptively as

the uncontained within the contained. The prophetic female subject, anticipated in the visionary mode of Jane Eyre, becomes in Villette, the undefined and undefinable "ontology" that resists realignment with a restrictive, Lockean space of cognition where the female subject is rendered as object.

Because my thesis focuses primarily on the ontology of the female subject as it emerges in Brontë's first-person narratives, I have chosen to eliminate Shirley from my discussion. Although Shirley, too, is a fascinating and highly experimental treatment of the female subject in narrative, it is problematic in a discussion concerned with what Tromly calls the "autobiographical narrators" in Brontë's fiction. As will emerge in the following chapters, one of my main concerns in aligning Brontë's work with the camera obscura is to articulate the interface of cognition, vision and representation in relation to an avowedly self-constructing narrator. For this reason, with the exception of some excerpts from the early works, I have limited my discussion to The Professor, Jane Eyre and Villette.

As Brontë develops the theatrical/virtual ontology of the female subject, it becomes clear that her narratives are aimed at a metaphysics of being that position the Lockean self, with its gendered protocols, as part of a discursive dynamic that cannot be substantiated as a stable

configuration of male and female identity. In place of the unitary selfhood figured in and contained by the camera of masculine authority, Brontë proposes a performative, metamorphic subjectivity that defies the boundaries of its containment. Registered on the level of the virtual where the patriarchal ontologies of female selfhood can be interrogated and dismantled, the theatre of female self-enactment becomes the surreal "ground" of a radical anti-ontology that undoes the subordinating enclosures naturalized by the masculine eye/I.

Chapter I

The *Camera Obscura* and Brontë's Romantic Aesthetic

Methodology

In my discussion of Brontë's work, I position the *camera obscura* as an axial concept that, while it is not explicitly claimed by Brontë herself as a defining structure, nevertheless implicitly intersects her texts and her practice as a writer. Working with Foucault's idea of the *diagram* as well as Jonathan Crary's approach to the *camera obscura* as a field of knowledge and practice implicated in the creation of subjectivity, I treat the *camera obscura*, not simply as an apparatus become metaphor, but as a *diagram* which manifests itself in forms and practices that contributed to the shaping of the female subject in Brontë's work.

In this chapter, I discuss my appropriation of Foucault's *diagram* and outline my position with regard to Crary's interpretation of the *camera obscura*. As a preliminary to the gendered epistemological and aesthetic issues associated with the *camera obscura* which are the subjects of the next chapter, I introduce the philosophical and aesthetic paradigms in which the gendering of the *camera obscura* is embedded ("Preliminary Intersections"). With a view to establishing the *camera* as a technology with

which Brontë would have been familiar, I discuss its ubiquity as an apparatus in the social and cultural landscape of the nineteenth century ("The Camera Obscura as Apparatus"). In particular, I position Locke's idea of the mind-as-camera obscura as a powerful and persistent model of mind which arose out of the Cartesian rationalism and empiricism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Because it seemed to guarantee a stable correspondence between the external object and the viewing subject, the Lockean camera obscura became the predominant paradigm not only for explaining the relationship between observer and observed, but also for perpetuating the dualism of subject and object on which rational/empiricist constructions of the observer were based. I also discuss Brontë's knowledge of the device and her familiarity with its associated metaphors ("The Camera Obscura as Paradigm"). Focusing on Romantic revisions of the classical camera obscura ("The Romantic Camera Obscura"), I link these revisions to associated concepts of the sublime and to Brontë's own aesthetic practice ("The Sublime and the Camera Obscura"). I then discuss how concepts of realism and ideology overlap with these Romantic revisions to produce Brontë's complex appropriations of the camera obscura in which she inscribes the strategies of self-empowerment. Here I observe how the architecture (of the body and of the rooms the body

inhabits) intersects the idea of the camera obscura ("Closeting the Body: Realism, Materialism and the Subject In Camera").

As a starting point, I offer Jonathan Crary's formulation of the camera obscura:

> [T]he camera obscura was not simply an inert and neutral piece of equipment or a set of technical premises to be tinkered with and improved over the years; rather, it was embedded in a much larger and denser organization of knowledge and of the observing subject. . . . This highly problematic object was far more than simply an optical device. For over two hundred years it subsisted as a philosophical metaphor, a model in the science of physical optics, and was also a technical apparatus used in a large range of cultural activities. For two centuries it stood as a model, in both rationalist and empiricist thought, of how observation leads to truthful inferences about the world; at the same time the physical incarnation of that model was a widely used means of observing the visible world, an instrument of popular entertainment, of scientific inquiry and of artistic practice. (28-9)

In his deployment of the camera obscura as a multiple structure itself structured by a "dense" organization of "knowledge and of the observing subject," Crary is indebted to Foucault, whose work has decisively construed the subject as a function of cultural, social and economic institutions and processes which determine the protocols of subjective empowerment or disempowerment. Although he does not specifically say so, Crary's borrowing of Foucaultian analytic technique also implicates the idea of the diagram, which is integral to Foucault's mapping of the subject

within the dynamic of power relations. The _diagram_, which is not contained either by the discursive formations of language or the non-discursive formations of non-linguistic experience, always remains an abstraction immanent in both. Gilles Deleuze, in his exposition of Foucault, offers one of the most accessible definitions of the _diagram_:

> The _diagram_ is no longer an auditory or visual archive but a map, a cartography that is coextensive with the whole social field. It is an abstract machine. It is defined by its informal functions and matter and in terms of form makes no distinction between content and expression, a discursive formation and a non-discursive formation. It is a machine that is almost blind and mute, even though it makes others see and speak. (34)

Referring to Foucault's very influential use of the Panopticon to illuminate the practices and forms of surveillance and imprisonment, Deleuze notes the Panopticon's diagrammatic character in Foucault's analyses. The Panopticon emerges within the function of Panopti_cism_, which is the _diagram_ that not only informs the apparatus of surveillance, but moves beyond it to intersect all that is "visible and articulable" in the field of the Panoptic. That is, Panopticism intersects not only the specific forms taken by the Panoptic model but the social and cultural arrangements, the epistemological assumptions and the entire "archive" of discursive and non-discursive forms that have to do with the Panoptic.

If the phrase were not so ridiculously clumsy, I would

refer, not to the camera obscura, but to camera obscuraism because, in keeping with Foucault's deployment of the Panopticon, I think of the camera as a diagram. Although it is possible to treat the camera as an apparatus and metaphor charged with aesthetic and epistemological associations, I find that such a construction is insufficient to the network of formations and practices which implicate the camera in Brontë's work and life. In my analysis of Brontë, I attempt to deploy the camera as a diagrammatic field where gendered power-relations come into play. Transecting the areas of epistemology and aesthetics as well as associated practices and forms by means of which the subject is constructed, the camera obscura becomes an intersectionary diagram or immanent "machine" which enables certain concepts, spaces, programmes and forms of female subjectivity to emerge.

Thus the camera obscura-as-diagram is a non-formal dynamic that can emerge in the field of the discursive and the non-discursive. As a dynamic abstraction, the camera/diagram is implicated in but is not on the side of image or word and can transect the entire aesthetic field without lodging itself as an absolute validation in any particular camp. In this respect, the concept of the transgressive diagram--which Deleuze defines as a "spatio-temporal multiplicity" (34)--is useful to me as a means of

linking diverse forms and practices within the range of the camera/diagram. The various structures, forms and dynamics of, for instance, literature, visual art, domestic architecture and theatre can be theorized as thresholds where the camera/diagram manifests itself. By the same token, the gendered cultural, social and epistemological norms in which Brontë's work is embedded can also be drawn into the network of the camera obscura.

In all the foregoing I am in agreement with Crary whose Foucauldian formation of the camera obscura is in keeping with these aspects of the diagram:

> For what constitutes the camera obscura is precisely its multiple identity, its 'mixed status' as an epistemological figure within a discursive order and an object within an arrangement of cultural practices. (30)

However, because Crary wishes to halt the diagrammatic power of the camera obscura in the early nineteenth century and because he is, to date, its most authoritative theorizer, I feel compelled to justify my own extension of the camera into the second third of the nineteenth century. To do so, I rely on certain aspects of the diagram which Crary does not address in his account, particularly the idea of the threshold. As Deleuze notes, knowledge, in Foucault's analyses, moves through accretions and divergences marked by thresholds:

> Knowledge is a practical assemblage, a "mechanism of statements and visibilities." . . . That is to say that knowledge exists only according to

> certain widely varying "thresholds" which impose particular layers, splits and directions on the stratum in question. In this respect, it is not enough to speak of a "threshold of epistemologization" . . . . [O]ther thresholds, moving off in other directions, also leave their mark on the stratum: thresholds involving ethics, aesthetics, politics, etc. (Foucault qtd. in Deleuze 51)

Although Crary's analysis cannot be expected to account for all possible thresholds at which the _camera_/_diagram_ emerges, I think he overdetermines the moment when the modern subject shifts from the paradigms of Cartesian optics to new forms of subjectivity derived from new optical devices such as the stereoscope. According to Crary, this shift took place "from around 1810 to 1840" and constituted an "uprooting of vision from the stable and fixed relations incarnated in the camera obscura" (14). These new instruments were "derived from new empirical studies of subjective vision . . . that encompasses an autonomous perception severed from any external referent" (14). As a result,

> Visual experience in the nineteenth century, despite all the attempts to authenticate and naturalize it, no longer has anything like the apodeictic claims of the camera obscura to establish its truth. (14)

In this moment, which occurred "before the appearance of photography," the subject is radically severed from any attachment to the "truth" apprehended in the model of the _camera obscura._ It is here that the _camera obscura_ reaches

a site of decisive rupture where the diagram can no longer claim significant continuity:

> The formal operation of a camera obscura as an abstract diagram may remain constant, but the function of the device or metaphor within an actual social or discursive field has fluctuated decisively. The fate of the camera obscura paradigm in the nineteenth century is a case in point. (29)

As Deleuze's remarks concerning the thresholds of knowledge suggest, the camera obscura-as-diagram can be expected to surface at numerous thresholds, one of which is the interface of technology and epistemology. It is on this interface that Crary bears down most heavily, because this is the site where he locates the decisive loss of truth value in the camera obscura's role as a model of perception and cognition. According to Crary, the camera obscura model "collapsed in the 1820s and 1830s, when it was displaced by radically different notions of what an observer was and of what constituted vision" (27). These new,

> influential figurations of an observer in the early nineteenth century depended on the priority of models of subjective vision, in contrast to the pervasive suppression of subjectivity in vision in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century thought. (9)

According to Crary, the rationalization of vision articulated in the camera obscura model of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was displaced by a more subjective model of vision inherent in devices such as the stereoscope that were technological indicators of a new kind of social

management and control of the individual.

As David Phillips has noted in his detailed and persuasive review of Techniques of the Observer, Crary's decisive moment fails to account for the reinscription of the camera obscura in photography which quickly overtook and displaced the stereoscope. I believe, with Phillips, that this division is based on a strategic oversight of the thresholds (or "points of emergence" (3), as Crary calls them) at which the camera obscura remained operative. In fact, the camera obscura, as Phillips points out, is never effaced by the stereoscope. If anything, it is the stereoscope, not the camera obscura, that is marginalized and rendered ineffectual:

> [T]he burden of significance that the stereoscope has to bear within [Crary's] polemic is just too great for it to sustain. After all, it was the stereoscope which was marginalized into near oblivion by photography which was itself to an extent (as Crary himself is asserting) a reincarnation of the camera obscura. (136)

Thus, far from displacing the camera obscura, the stereoscope joins the camera obscura and the modern camera as one of a group of optical instruments which informed nineteenth-century modes of visualization. In fact, the camera obscura remained an essential model of vision in optical texts of the nineteenth century. Hermann von Helmholz, "the great nineteenth century man of science" (Wertheimer 83) who wrote one of the century's definitive

works, the Handbuch der Physiologischen Optik (Handbook of Physiological Optics),[1] refers to the camera obscura as a fundamental model of vision:

> In its optical behaviour the eye is essentially like a camera obscura. In order for a luminous point to be seen distinctly, the light diverging from it must be refracted by the media of the eye and thereby converged at some point of the retina. On the surface of this membrane a real optical image is projected of the external objects in view, which is inverted and very much reduced in size. (91)

Although von Helmholz goes on to discuss the complexities of binocular vision in relation to other optical instruments such as the stereoscope, his use of the camera obscura as the founding explanatory model of optics in his Handbuch affirms that the camera was still very much a part of nineteenth-century optical discourse.[2] Thus, as Phillips suggests, rather than inscribing a rupture between the stereoscope and the camera/camera obscura paradigm, it is more in keeping with actual events--since nineteenth-century observers managed to use the stereoscope, the camera obscura and the camera without too much difficulty--to think of the relationship among these instruments as a palimpsest of visual modes and models:

> As opposed to [Crary's] sequential model predicated upon an either/or model of vision according to which it is either passive or active, detached and imprinted upon or else fully autonomous, etc., vision operates instead as a palimpsest which conflates many different modes of perception--a model which applies both to the history of vision and to the perception of the singular observer. (137)

Such a framework would account for the variability of visual experience which is not rigidly demarcated but depends on the "spectator's oscillation or mobility between various subject-positions," an oscillation that is "intrinsic not only to the specific pleasures of looking but also to vision more generally" (137). From this more flexible perspective, it is possible to position the camera obscura as a diagram which emerges in a wider field and on more levels than Crary's over-exclusive definition of the camera obscura will allow. In the palimpsest of modes and models that constitutes the diagrammatic emergences of the camera obscura, earlier uses of the camera obscura paradigm are related to later (often contradictory) revisions in a network of applications that extends from the seventeenth century well into the nineteenth century and beyond.

I have set Phillips against Crary in order to rescue the camera obscura from Crary's too-rigid categorizing and reassign it the diagrammatic power and versatility which it retained throughout the nineteenth century. By taking this position, I attempt to demonstrate, without ignoring its historic specificity, the polysemous nature of the camera obscura model, which is far more endemic to nineteenth-century life, and, consequently, to Brontë's life and practice, than Crary acknowledges. For this reason, the following discussion of the camera obscura is directed at

the configuration and reconfiguration of the subject *in camera* as the observer passes through the rationalizations of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries into the subjective revisions and resistances of Romanticism and the realisms of the nineteenth century. By also noting Brontë's own participation in this positioning and repositioning I construct her, too, as a participant in the shifting epistemological and aesthetic life of the *camera obscura*.

Preliminary Intersections

1) The *Camera Obscura* as Apparatus

Although I intend to discuss the *camera obscura* at various thresholds or intersections, I would like to begin with the *camera* as an apparatus and insert here a brief history of the device with examples of its nineteenth century manifestations.[3] As Crary tells us, "It has been known for at least two thousand years that when light passes through a small hole into a dark, enclosed interior, an inverted image will appear on the wall opposite the hole" (27). According to John Hammond, this basic principle of the *camera* was noted in Chinese texts as early as the fifth century B.C. (8); but it was during the Renaissance with the development of optics and optical instruments that the *camera obscura* came into its own as a

technology. The camera obscura has been closely associated with the development of perspective, and Alberti (whose De Pittura (1436) contains the first theoretical construction of perspective) employed a camera obscura as a drawing aid.[4] However, the first written account of the camera obscura and its uses occurs in Giovanni Battista della Porta's Magia Naturalis. Published in 1558, this popular work helped to establish the camera obscura as a well-known instrument and optical model.

The name itself comes from Johannes Kepler who, in the early seventeenth century, used the camera obscura to make astronomical observations. Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the camera obscura developed both as a technology and as a model of human vision. As Crary succinctly puts it,

> from the late 1500s to the end of the 1700s the structural and optical principles of the camera obscura coalesced into a dominant paradigm through which was described the status and possibilities of an observer. (27)

Although Crary strategically fails to record the camera obscura's presence in the nineteenth century, the camera obscura did not disappear from the technological scene until the end of that century. Hammond, in his detailed account, makes it clear that the camera was a well-known and well-represented apparatus throughout this period:

> There is little doubt that during the nineteenth

> century the camera obscura reached the height of its popularity as a useful technical device and as an entertaining diversion. The large room-type camera obscura became an attractive entertainment and many were built in gardens, parks and at holiday resorts. (104)

Although the invention of photography in 1839 provided a more thoroughly mechanical means of representation, the camera obscura remained in use as a copying device. As Hammond notes, "many amateur artists still preferred to sketch or paint and frequently made use of the camera obscura, which was consequently manufactured and sold throughout the century" (104).

As an instrument, the camera obscura was remarkably various in form and scale, and Hammond provides numerous nineteenth-century examples. The larger camera obscurae were small buildings or rooms which contained the observer completely. Very large camera obscurae, such as the observatory in Edinburgh, could accommodate several observers at once (Fig.1).

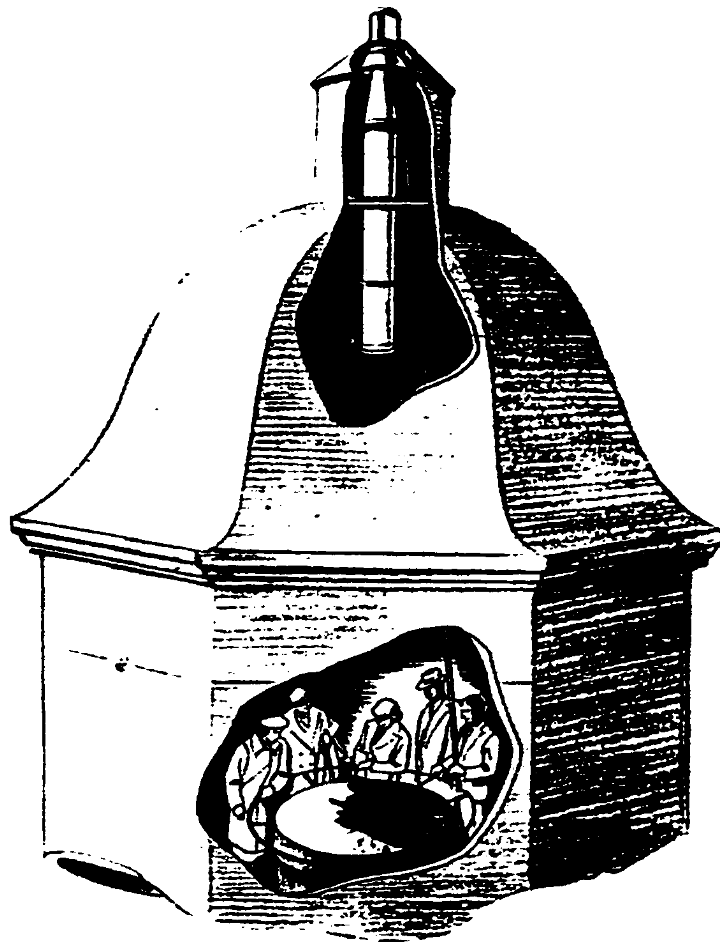
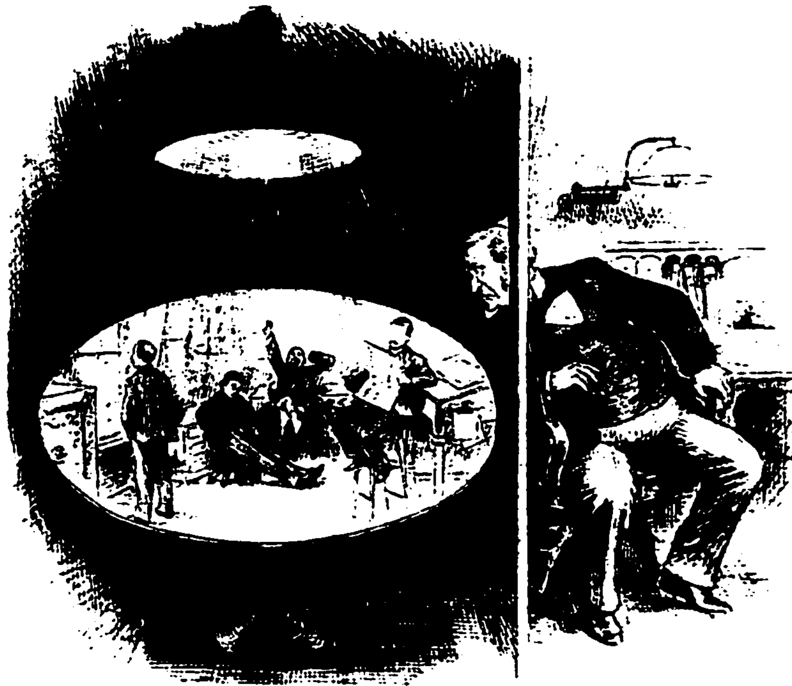


Fig. 1. The Outlook Tower camera obscura at Edinburgh was built in 1823-4 and was opened to the public in 1856. Illustration from catalogue of Messrs Barr and Stroud; rpt. in Hammond (111)

An engraving from <u>Wonders of Optics</u> (1868) illustrates the room <u>camera obscura</u> in its capacity as an educational tool and form of family entertainment (Fig. 2).

Fig. 2. Room <u>camera obscura</u> from <u>Wonders of Optics</u> (1868); rpt. Hammond 123.

A nineteenth-century American cartoon suggests the camera obscura as a means of surveillance for bosses who wished to spy on their less-than-industrious workers (Fig.3).



"*Camera obscura for offices much needed by business men*"

Fig. 3. Illustration from a nineteenth-century American Journal; rpt. Hammond 133.

Surveillance was also a feature of the camera obscurae located at popular holiday resorts where advertisements encouraged patrons to enjoy its voyeuristic delights (Fig.4)[5]

Fig. 4. An illustration from a guide book to Brighton by J. Whittemore (1825); rpt. Hammond 117.

As Hammond notes, because the camera obscura was most popularly used as an aid to drawing, portable cameras were developed which allowed artists and illustrators to carry their means of reproduction with them. These portable units came in a variety of sizes, ranging from closet-like sedan chairs (Fig. 5) or one-person tents (Fig. 6) to box camera obscuras and small, hand-held models (Fig. 7).

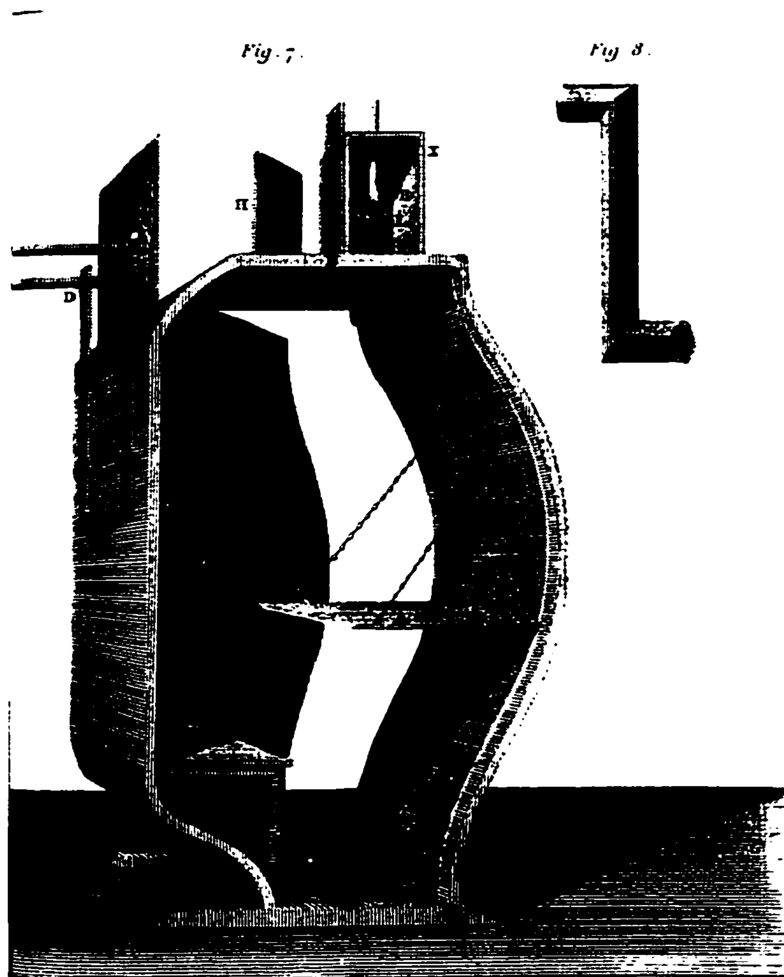


Fig. 5. Sedan chair camera obscura. Mid-eighteenth century; rpt. Crary (28).

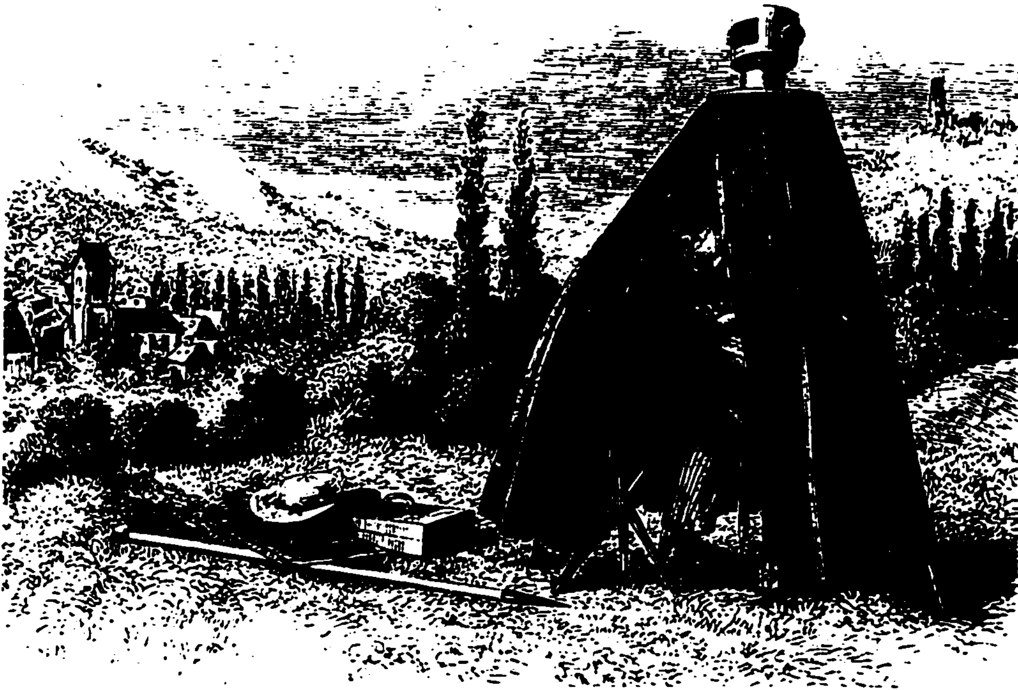


Fig. 6. Tent camera obscura. From Natural Philosophy by E. Atkinson (1900); rpt. Hammond 118.

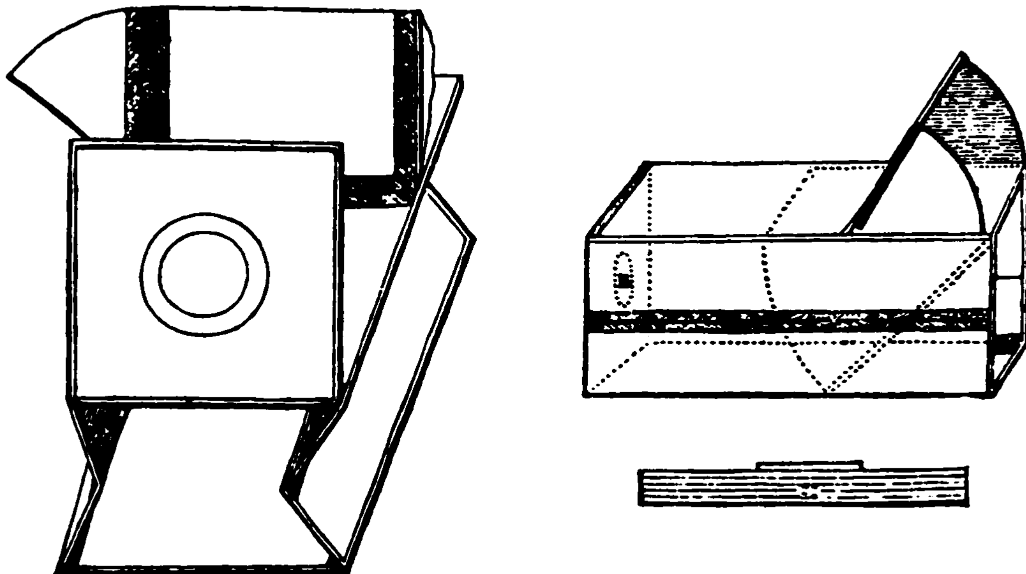


Fig. 7. Pocket camera obscura from Magazine of Science (1842); rpt. Hammond 129.

Thus, the camera obscura as an apparatus was by no means effaced, and the various optical practices it defined and represented were still very much in play during Brontë's time.

Given the popular presence achieved by the camera obscura during the nineteenth century, it would be surprising had Brontë been unfamiliar with the apparatus. In fact, it is quite likely that she would have known of the camera obscura because of her familiarity with the art and the art practices of her day. Brontë was herself an ambitious amateur artist who, until she devoted herself to writing, intended to make illustration her career.[6] Her brother, Branwell, received a more professional training as a portrait painter and, if he did not use one himself, would certainly have been familiar with the camera obscura and its uses, since it had long been an important apparatus in the production of visual representations. Martin Kemp, in his history, The Science of Art, identifies the camera obscura as a "perspective machine" that had an enormous impact on artistic practice. It became the optical instrument that not only exemplified and incorporated the principles of linear perspective, but also automated the process of perspective drawing (188-99). Although the use of the camera obscura in art was often considered as a too-automatic means of representation,[7] it was certainly

embedded in aesthetic practice as one of the "perspective machines" with which the nineteenth-century art student would be acquainted.[8]

In fact, a passage from the juvenilia describing the paraphernalia of an artist's studio suggests that Brontë was familiar with the optical devices used in painting:

> Numerous pictures, some in heavy gilt frames, others as yet unfinished, leant against the walls; several busts, plaster casts, etc., stood on stands or on the table amidst a miscellaneous heap of loose sketches, engravings, crayons, colour boxes, gilt and morocco-bound tomes, etc., etc. In one corner a lay figure spread its arms abroad. In another stood a large camera lucida. (EEW 2.1: 327)

Frustratingly, Brontë refers to a camera lucida rather than a camera obscura in what is, I believe, an error in terminology. As Hammond notes, the camera obscura was often mistakenly called a camera lucida (65). Because the camera lucida was a small and much less popular enlarging device, I think it is reasonable to assume that the "large camera lucida" which Brontë mentions is actually a more commonplace camera obscura.[9]

Whatever the rights of this particular piece of evidence, the following passage from a letter to Brontë written by her friend, Mary Taylor, not only assumes that Brontë would know the camera obscura but also suggests that the device was an item of general knowledge:

> I have just made acquaintance with Dr. and Mrs. Logan. He is a retired navy doctor, and has more general knowledge than any one I have talked to

> here. For instance, he had heard of Philippe Egalité; of a camera-obscura; of the resemblance the English language has to the German, etc., etc. (SHLL 2:238)

Taylor's list implies that knowledge of the camera obscura was considered part of the intellectual baggage attributable to any well-informed person of the day and that Brontë would have been aware of this fact.

Certainly there was plenty of information about the camera obscura available to Brontë. Apart from its physical presence, the camera obscura was well-represented in texts to which Brontë had access. Many of the works in the Keighley Library,[10] often cited as an important source for the Brontës' reading, refer to the camera obscura. Smith's Optics, for instance, contained a description of the device, as did Chamber's Cyclopedia, and Ferguson's Lectures included a detailed description of a camera complete with diagrams. If it is difficult to imagine Brontë borrowing works of such a technical nature, other works, more closely associated with literature and art, were likely to have interested her. Reynolds's Discourses and Hayter's On Perspective both include discussions of the camera obscura. As an amateur artist, Brontë might well have read these works, particularly Reynolds's Discourses, a classic aesthetic text.[11] As Christine Alexander notes, Reynolds featured in Brontë's juvenilia under the guise of the Angrian artist, DeLisle, who was "great in the

beautiful" ("Art and Artists" 180).[12]

Another link between Brontë and the camera obscura can be drawn via Richardson's novel, Sir Charles Grandison, which Brontë certainly read.[13] Here Sir Charles, who is discussing the subject of courtship and marriage with his sister, asks if he might make "a Lover's Camera Obscura" for her (98). Although it is not represented in strictly optical terms, Richardson's erotic version of the camera obscura (to which I will return later) does represent an allusion to the device which Brontë would have encountered in her reading.

The presence of the camera obscura as a popular optical apparatus in the nineteenth century is significant, then, not only because such a presence supports the notion of the camera obscura's continuing influence during the century as a whole, but because evidence of its ubiquity suggests that, as a technology, it informed the cultural paradigms of Brontë and her circle. Thus, although Crary's work would seem to deny it, the camera obscura as an apparatus can be said to intersect, not only the visual technology of the nineteenth century, but also, more specifically, the historical field of Brontë's life and practice.

2) The Camera Obscura as Paradigm

More than a technology, however, the camera obscura also

functioned on a noninstrumental level, as a model of vision and cognition and as a figure by means of which related epistemologies and ideologies were articulated. Moreover, its power on this level continued to be pervasive into the nineteenth century and beyond.[14] As Phillips affirms, the camera obscura, after the eighteenth century, "continued to stand as a recurrent and powerful metaphor not only for vision but also for the workings of ideology, consciousness and knowledge" (136). In fact, one could argue that the camera obscura, because it may be embedded in consciousness itself, belongs to a diagrammatic order that extends through history on the level of cognitive mapping. Although it is a subject beyond the scope of this discussion, I think it is useful to mention here the metaphoric nature of cognition itself which, as George Lakoff and Mark Johnson have demonstrated, is informed by structural metaphors, particularly metaphors of containment and spatial definition which demarcate the boundaries of self and the experience of what lies beyond the self. According to Lakoff and Johnson, this spatial metaphorics relates to what is fundamental in human experience:

> We are physical beings, bounded and set off from the rest of the world by the surface of our skins, and we experience the rest of the world as outside us. Each of us is a container with a bounding surface and an in-out orientation. We project our own in-out orientation onto other physical objects that are bounded by surfaces. Thus we also view them as containers with an inside and an outside. Rooms and houses are

> obvious containers. Moving from room to room is moving from one container to another. . . . But even where there is no natural physical boundary that can be viewed as defining a container, we impose boundaries--marking off territory so that it has an inside and a bounding surface--whether a wall, a fence or an abstract line or plane. There are few human instincts more basic than territoriality. (Metaphors We Live By 29)

Such spatialization is also inclusive of vision. As Lakoff and Johnson note,

> We conceptualize our visual field as a container and conceptualize what we see as being inside it. Even the term 'visual field' suggests this. . . . Given that a bounded physical space is a CONTAINER and that our field of vision correlates with that bounded physical space, the metaphorical concept VISUAL FIELDS ARE CONTAINERS emerges naturally. (30)

Psychologist Eve Sweetser, in her study of transnational linguistics, notices a "broad tendency, throughout the history of the Indo-European languages, for the vocabulary of physical vision to develop cognitive and intellectual senses" (721). Language, according to Sweetser, incorporates vision as a significant component of its spatializing metaphors. Thus, the camera obscura, with its containment of the viewing subject and its spatialized optics, might well belong to this order of cognitive metaphorics, a possibility which may also account for the camera's diagrammatic tenacity and for what Phillips identifies as the historically overlapping or palimpsestic nature of visual/cognitive paradigms.[15]

Certainly, one of the camera obscura's most potent

characteristics is its capacity to function as a model of both eye and mind. The peculiar conflation of sight and consciousness in the figure of the *camera obscura* privileges the eye as the primary sensory vehicle of cognition and ascribes to mental operations the capacity to see and envision. In the *camera obscura*, seeing is equivalent to knowing, and the discursive history of the *camera obscura* in well-known scientific and philosophical texts attests to this intersection of vision, optics and the theorization of cognition. For instance, René Descartes, in *La Dioptrique* (1637), associated the eye and its optical mechanism with the *camera obscura* (Fig. 8), an association made more explicit in an eighteenth- century illustration (Fig. 9).

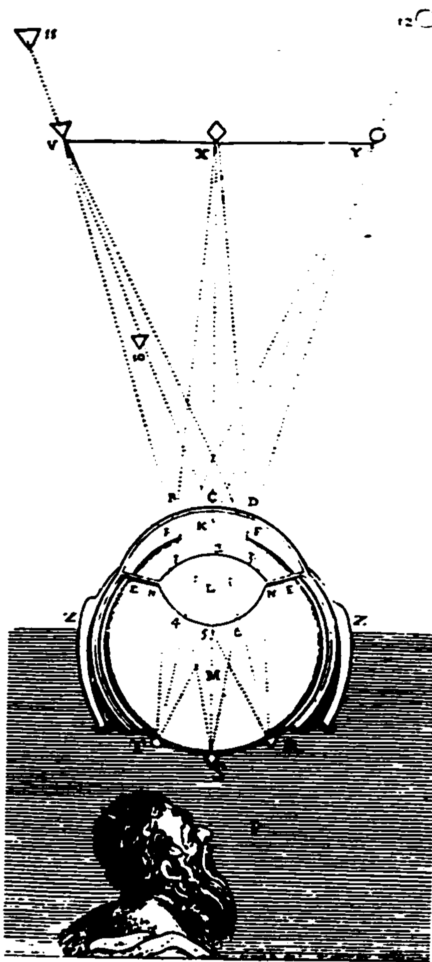


Fig. 8. Illustration from René Descartes's *La Dioptrique* (1637); rpt. in Hammond 24.

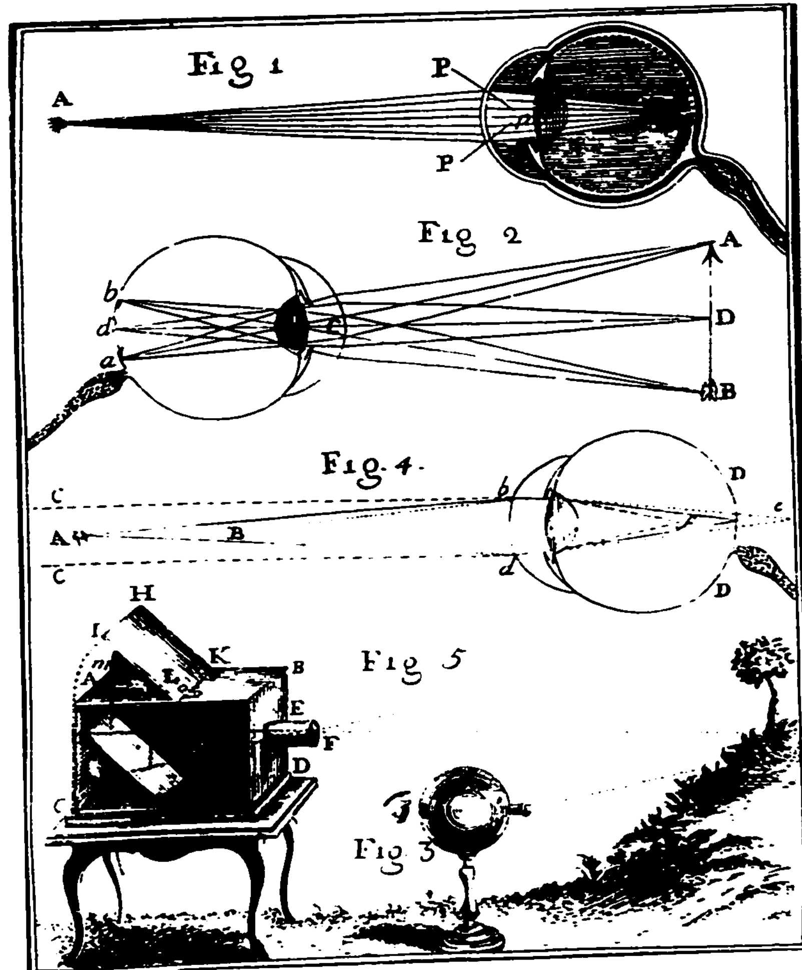


Fig. 9. Comparison of eye and camera obscura. Early eighteenth century; rpt. Crary 49.

This figuration of the eye as a camera obscura also had epistemological consequences. By implying a vision unmediated by subjective response, the camera obscura-as-eye could function as a paradigmatic vehicle of empirical observation endorsed by the truth value of a neutral eye. As Crary notes, Isaac Newton's Opticks is informed by the idea of the camera obscura (40). Not only does Newton explain optics in terms of the camera obscura; he also employs the camera, with its capacity to figure vision and the act of observation, as the validating epistemology which underwrites the "truth" of his own observations.

The most well-known and influential deployment by far of the camera obscura paradigm is, of course, John Locke's configuration of the mind as a camera obscura:

> I . . . confess here again, That external and internal Sensation are the only passages that I can find of Knowledge, to the Understanding. These alone, as far as I can discover, are the Windows by which light is let into this dark room. For, methinks, the Understanding is not much unlike a Closet wholly shut from light, with only some little openings left, to let in external visible Resemblances, Ideas of things without; would the Pictures coming into such a dark room but stay there and lie so orderly as to be found upon occasion it would very much resemble the understanding of man. (Essay Concerning Human Understanding II.11.17)[16]

Although Locke's idea of mind is haunted by some crucial paradoxes and ambiguities (to which I will return), his favouring of vision as the sensory "ground" of cognition is in keeping with Cartesian and Newtonian optics,[17] as is the

epistemology which assigns truth value to an orderly assembly of images or "ideas" transmitted through the transparent aperture of a neutral eye into the "space" of a mind/eye. Crary, citing Richard Rorty, associates Locke and Descartes in their "conception of the human mind as an inner space in which both pains and clear and distinct ideas passed in review before an Inner Eye" (43).

Epitomized in Locke's camera obscura, this mechanics of perception and cognition was accepted, as Michael Kearns affirms, as essentially true until well into the nineteenth century:

> During the period from the end of the seventeenth century until the second third of the nineteenth, the theory of the formation of ideas was based on relatively mechanical and automatic processes. Locke was regarded as essentially correct in tracing all ideas to sensations and therefore all knowledge ultimately to combinations of sense impressions . . . . (48)

Locke suggested that the impression of sensory material, as it passes through the aperture of the camera obscura/mind, can imprint itself, as on a wax tablet, blank slate or blank paper (to use an assortment of Lockean metaphors), and remain stored there. It is this photographic process of the image passing through the neutral eye and imprinting itself, more or less permanently, in the space of the mind, which has persisted as a paradigm of mental and sensory function:

> Locke's blank slate, as vigorously as it was criticized during the two hundred years following

> the publication of his Essay Concerning Human Understanding, remained compelling as a description of the process and mechanism of human learning because of his metaphors--not that anyone believed in the existence of an actual slate somewhere in the cranium, but the dominant theory of sensations and memory required some mechanism for recording sensations and impressions from the external world. (Kearns 25)

As Kearns suggests, the ubiquity of Locke's camera obscura metaphor, in combination with the figure of the blank slate, naturalized the idea of the mind as a spatially defined entity, which he refers to as "mind-as-entity" (2). Psychologists and philosophers after Locke, in challenging (and thereby also preserving) his system, "still required a mental entity that could receive impressions and replicate external processes and states in an internal space" (55). Kearns argues that, although later philosophies of mind attempt to resist the mind-as-entity concept, their reliance on the metaphor of the mind as a "space" of cognitive and perceptual activity, continually reinscribes the power of that metaphor. Reid, for instance, in his Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man (1789), while he "seized every opportunity to illustrate the problems caused by metaphorical language used to talk about the mind" and wished to challenge "Locke's view of the mind as occupying a 'presence room'" (Kearns 35), nevertheless perpetuates the Lockean notion of ideas being impressed in the space of the mind. In

discussing the concept of the "train of ideas" in relation to the development of a child's mind, Reid suggests that images of "fancy" are "stored" and "impressed" in the mind-space:

> "As children grow up they are delighted with tales . . . everything of this kind stores the fancy with a new regular train of thought, which becomes familiar by repetition so that one part draws the whole after it in imagination." This exercise of the imagination "gives rise to innumerable new associations . . . which make the deeper impression upon the mind, as they are its exclusive property." (Reid qtd. in Kearns 7-8)

The process continues in the adult mind: "'There is a mould in his mind . . . [and] his discourse falls into this mould with ease, and takes its form from it'" (Reid qtd. in Kearns 8).

Hume, who also wishes to challenge the unitary nature of mind, insists that it is "'nothing but a heap or collection of different perceptions, united together by certain relations, and suppos'd tho' falsely, to be endowed with perfect simplicity and identity'" (Treatise of Human Nature qtd. in Kearns 53).[18] Yet, in his discussion of the difference between ideas and impressions (which strongly resembles the workings of the camera obscura), Hume relies on the metaphor of the mind as an impressible container of perception: "'An impression first strikes upon the senses. . . . Of this impression there is a copy taken by the mind, which remains after the impression ceases and this we call

an idea'" (Treatise qtd. in Kearns 52).

Later psychologists like Thomas Brown and Dugald Stewart (whose works were available in the Keighley Library)[19] also retained the metaphor in their works. Stewart for instance, in his Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind (1792), "identifies education's first priority as making sure that the understanding is well stored with particular facts" (qtd. in Kearns 77). Brown, who in his Sketch of a System of Philosophy of the Human Mind (1820) "suggests that all mental phenomena be regarded 'simply as states of mind'" (Brown qtd. in Kearns 10), still describes the mind in physical terms as an entity. "In Brown's opinion, the mind can be studied with the same methods used in the study of the phenomena of the material world, especially close observation and classification" (Kearns 10). While he retains a "mentalistic view" (i.e. non-substantial view) of the mind, Brown preserves the idea of the mind as an entity whose components can be observed and studied. Thus, as Kearns argues, the space of introspection initially posited by Descartes and modified in the "closet" of Locke's empiricism, continues to be embedded in the writings of the later empiricists and in theories of prominent nineteenth-century psychologists.

As Kearns argues, Brontë's work was also informed by the idea of the mind as an entity, although her treatment

of it represented a significant modification of the metaphor. According to Kearns,

> a thinking substance . . . figuratively represented as a malleable, localizable and discrete entity . . . could not accommodate some mental phenomena that were becoming more and more interesting. Two particular areas of experience remained relatively inaccessible: powerful, apparently innate feelings (usually characterized as "the heart"), and the sense of mind as a complex being governed by the laws perhaps very different from those of the physical world . . . . (136).

Brontë's work, although it modifies the concept of mind as a simple entity by affirming the complexity of mind through its explorations of non-rational mental states and through its inscription of emotional and imaginative response, still "attests to the lingering attraction of that metaphor [mind-as-entity]" (24).[20]

While I cannot reproduce the range of Kearns' history of the mind-as-entity metaphor here, I can suggest, through references to Brontë's own works and to certain works to which she had (or might have had) access, that Brontë's epistemology was informed by the idea, based on Lockean metaphorics, of the mind as a camera obscura.

A series of seven articles in Blackwood's entitled "The Metaphysician" (which appeared from June 1836 to December 1836) provides some evidence that Locke's models and metaphors of mind persisted in nineteenth-century philosophical commentary during Brontë's formative years.

Throughout this series, the author (John Wilson,[21] one of the editors of the magazine) traces the development of psychological theory beginning with Locke. In "No. I, On the Philosophy of Locke" (June 1836), Wilson summarizes the essentials of Locke's philosophy of mind in an effort to clear up "erroneous views" concerning Locke's "principles" (798). In the process of this clarification, he reiterates Locke's concept of mind as a container of impressions. Wilson states that "by perceiving [Locke] means the mind's "simple apprehension of any impression" (799). He then goes on to quote Locke in a passage that recalls the camera metaphor (although modified by the inclusion of sound and touch):

> Thus, too, he says,"that all that are born into the world being surrounded with bodies that perpetually imprint themselves on the minds of children;" going on to say, in illustration, "light and colour are busy at hand everywhere when the eye is but open. Sounds and some tangible qualities fail not to solicit their proper senses, and to force an entrance to the mind." (799)

While Wilson acknowledges that Locke's Essay is "at some points vulnerable" (804) he insists that "This great undertaking of one bold and original mind changed the face of science in this country" (801).

The other articles deal with developments introduced by later theorizers like Hume, Reid, Brown and Stewart, but even there, Locke is continually invoked. In "No. III

Sensation Perception Consciousness Attention" (Aug. 1836) Wilson associates Locke with Reid by identifying them as fellow founders of that field (255); and defends Locke even as he acknowledges the valid contributions of Reid, Brown and Stewart.

In "No. IV Touch and Sight," Wilson is again very Lockean in his approach, especially to sight:

> If we look into our own minds and ask whence is our notion of the extension of bodies--the ready answer is from sight . . . . Nor is it . . . to be doubted that the greater part of our actual notion of extension has been derived directly from the impressions of sight. (329-30)

In "No. VI The Intellective Faculty" (Nov. 1836), he again quotes extensively from Locke (and also makes some references to Newton) in his explanation of intellect. He states, in fact, that "the clearest manner of exhibiting the nature of the action of this faculty is suggested by Locke--to examine in their simplest forms some of the relations it discerns" (627). Wilson then goes on to explain (in a statement that recalls both Locke's idea of abstraction and Blake's circumscribing Newton) how the mind organizes matter through reason in the manner of geometric abstraction:[22]

> And these two sciences [algebra and geometry] . . . of Number and Extension, drawn from matter by intellect, and again in their intellectual perfection applied to it, are capable of comprehending the whole material universe. (640)

Thus, in this popularizing "treatise" written by one of the

most important journalists of the period, mind reappears as the container, not only of perception and cognition, but of the universe.

In another instance of "camera-obscuraism," Georges Sand,[23] whom Brontë read and admired, describes a visual/mental process reminiscent of Locke's camera obscura/mind in Lettres d'un Voyageur:

> For the remainder of the time day-dream, but taking care to change your place or pipe or the direction of your gaze. . . . You will start by achieving a remarkable sharpness of observation and peace of mind with which to register images--whether of ideas or objects--in those compartments of the brain which are like the pages of an album. (142)

Modern Painters, which Brontë read in 1848 (see SHLL 2:240), is another indicator of the persistence of Lockean concepts of cognition and perception in aesthetic discourse. In the first volume of Modern Painters, Ruskin quotes from Locke's Essay to illustrate the need for the "cultivation" of perceptual judgement:

> The first great mistake that people make in this matter [of fidelity to nature in art], is the supposition that they must see a thing if it be before their eyes. They forget the great truth told them by Locke, book ii, chap 9. 3--"This is certain that whatever alterations are made in the body, if they reach not the mind; whatever impression are made on the outward parts, if they are not taken notice of within; there is no perception." (28)

Certainly there is reason to assume that Brontë's own cognitive figuration is informed by Lockean metaphors, as

is evident in a playful passage from one of her early letters to her friend, Ellen Nussey. Here Brontë refers to her own mind as a container, claiming that the wind on the moors "has produced the same effect on my knowledge-box that a quiagh of usquebaugh does upon those of most other bipeds" (SHLL 1:216). In a less bibulous vein, Brontë employs Locke's blank-slate metaphor when she tells Nussey that, although time and distance have made her an "insubstantial impression on the memory," it is an impression "happily incapable of erasure" (SHLL 1:126).

These Lockean images of the mind as a "knowledge box" in which memories are impressed, contained and preserved reappear in The Professor where the idea of memories sealed in urns becomes an important theme. As Annette Tromly notes (96), this imagery is reminiscent of Locke, particularly the passage in which the mind is figured as a tomblike repository of fading images: "[O]ur Minds represent to us those Tombs . . . where, though the Brass and Marble remain, yet the Inscriptions are effaced by time and the Imagery moulders away" (Essay II.10.4). Even closer to Locke's camera however, is Crimsworth's image of his mind as a gallery of paintings that represent his memories of past experience (55).[24]

Jane Eyre, too, contains references to the Lockean mind. For instance, at the end of the discussion during

which Rochester informs Jane of the corrupt nature of his mind, she advises him:

> It seems to me, that if you tried hard, you would become what you yourself would approve; and that if from this day you began with resolution to correct your thoughts and actions, you would in a few years have laid up a new and stainless store of recollections, to which you might refer with pleasure. (169)

Here, Jane implies that Rochester's mind, in the manner of Locke's camera, can "lay up" an orderly "store" of new memories which will supersede those ideas and images that have infected his mind. When she observes that a new face is like a new picture in a gallery, Jane (echoing Crimsworth) implies that her own mind is like a Lockean container, ready to store new images as they are received by the eye. Similarly, Lucy Snowe, when she is falsely accused by M. Paul of having had a classical education, responds in Lockean fashion:

> The privileges of a 'classical education,' it was insinuated had been mine; . . . a golden store hived in memory now sustained my efforts and privily nurtured my wits. (444)

Whether in support of Locke's ideas or against them, writers of Brontë's period take his model of mind to be fundamental. For instance, an article by John Héraud[25] in Fraser's Magazine concerning the nature of poetic genius employs Lockean paradigms to explain the basic mechanisms of perception and cognition while denying that the mind is a mere mechanical apparatus. Although Héraud's project is

to criticize and modify Locke, the lengthy quotation of a key passage from the Introduction to the Essay ensures that Locke's concept of the mind/eye is inscribed as the acknowledged subtext of Héraud's own argument:

> "The understanding," says Locke "like the eye, whilst it makes us see and perceive all other things, takes no notice of itself; and it requires art and pains to set it at a distance, and make it its own object. But whatever be the difficulties that lie in the way of this inquiry--whatever it be that keeps us so much in the dark ourselves--sure I am that all the light we can let in upon our own minds, all the acquaintance we can make with our understanding, will not only be very pleasant, but bring us great advantage in directing our thoughts in search of other things." ("On Poetical Genius, Considered as a Creative Power" 61)

This article, which unfortunately appears in February 1830, a year earlier than the Brontës' subscription to the magazine,[26] nevertheless implies that Locke's model of mind still stood as a standard (if besieged) model of perception and cognition in the aesthetic criticism of Brontë's day.

Thus, while I cannot claim that Brontë actually read Locke's Essay (although it was available at the Keighley Library), Locke's model of mind, as well as the mind-as-camera obscura metaphor, had, by her time, become commonplace and paradigmatic enough to suggest that she would have absorbed them as important elements of the cultural background of the period.

The emergence of Locke's model of mind within Brontë's discursive field is not surprising, given the capacity of

the camera/mind to figure the conflicting, often paradoxical, relations in which the observer of Brontë's period was embedded. Transecting the rationalism of the Enlightenment observer and the anti-rationalism of the Romantic observer, the camera obscura developed into the nineteenth century as a complex paradigm that could incorporate a range of epistemological positions.

Among the pre-Romantic functions of the camera obscura, as I have noted above, was its employment as a model of cognition and perception which could guarantee the truth value of observation. In the overlapping structures of rationalist and empiricist epistemology, the camera obscura could figure the rationalism of the Cartesian viewer as well as the empirical rationalism of the Newtonian/Lockean observer. As Crary says of Newton's Opticks and Locke's Essay: "What they jointly demonstrate is how the camera obscura was a model simultaneously for the observation of empirical phenomena and for reflective introspection and self-observation" (40). Thus the conflation of eye and mind figured in the camera obscura (as the citation from Locke in Héraud's article implies) structures the mind as an eye that can accurately observe external phenomena while also observing itself as an "object" of perception. In this self-reflective optics, the camera obscura becomes the site of an eye that

professes to guarantee the truth value, not only of its externally generated perceptions, but also of its own workings.

Such rationalist/empiricist concepts of cognition and perception propose an observer whose eye and mind derive authority from the camera obscura's capacity to figure the subject as a transcendent mind informed by a transparent eye. Heavily invested in the stabilities of the camera obscura, these classical models of mind emphasized the camera's figuration of fixed relations between exterior and interior, observer and observed, in order to endow the rational subject with the authority of empirical "truth." As Crary notes, the conferral of such authority required certain emphases which favoured the idea of the camera obscura as the site of a cognitive/visual regime that could affirm the transcendent rationality of the classical subject. The camera obscura, because it enfolds the viewer who sees an image filtered through the lens of the aperture/eye, creates a space of interiorization and demarcation that "impels a kind of askesis, or withdrawal from the world, in order to regulate and purify one's relation to the manifold contents of the now 'exterior' world" (Crary 39). A seventeenth-century illustration of a camera obscura and study epitomizes the space of such a withdrawal (Fig. 10).

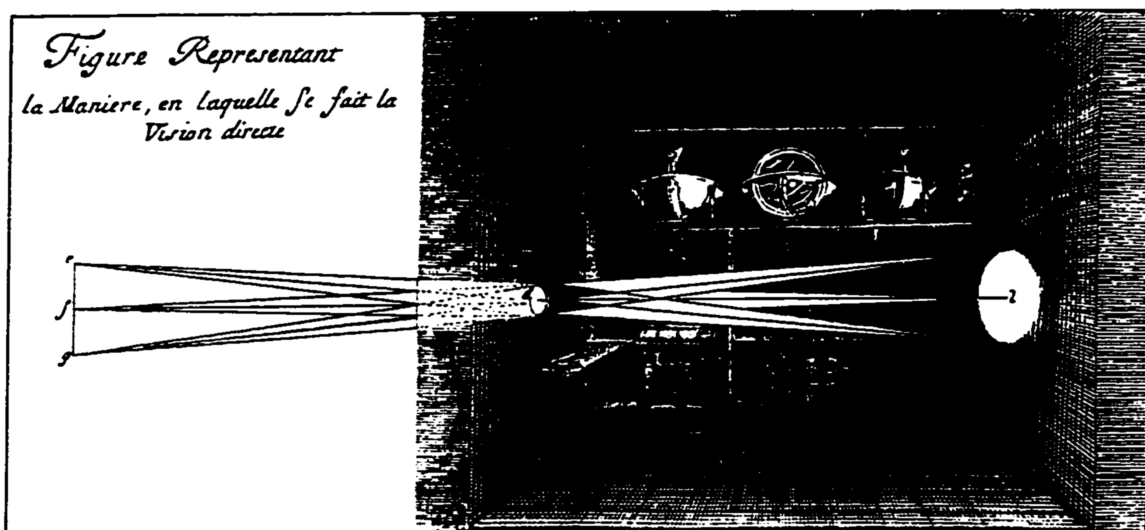


Fig. 10. Illustration from La Dioptrique Oculaire by Cherubin d'Orleans (1671); rpt. Hammond 29.

By abstracting from the "manifold" a purified relation between observer and observed, the camera obscura constructs a sovereign subject whose own abstraction from the polymorphic array of experience is invested with the authority of Platonic idealization. Ensconced within the neutral mechanism of the mind/eye, the observer in the classical camera obscura "is there as a disembodied witness to a mechanical and transcendental re-presentation of the objectivity of the world" (41). As Barbara Stafford observes, such abstraction (derived from Neoplatonism) was characteristic of both Descartes and Locke. We can detect the tendency to abstraction

> in Descartes's profane will to differentiate an intellectual ens from everything corporeal, to divide form unerringly from matter. The procedure was also operative in Locke's 'way of ideas' intent upon separating the simple from the complex, whereby the mind had the power to abstract general representations from

particulars. (135)[27]

The *camera obscura* paradigm thus became the fittingly geometric space of an observer imbued simultaneously with the mechanical perspective of the eye/mind and the transcendent perspective of the abstract/abstracted viewer. Here, the noumenal space of the rational observer coincided with the optical space of the empirical observer to produce an overlay of signification that resulted in paradox. By referring the ultimate authority of its mechanics of observation to the subject *in camera*, the truth value of the classical *camera obscura* paradigm rests on the contradictory assumption that a subjective response can operate empirically and transcendentally. Crary, citing Edmund Husserl, identifies this as "the major philosophical problem" of the rationalist/empirical tradition: "How a philosophizing which seeks its ultimate foundations in the subjective . . . can claim an objectively 'true' and metaphysically transcendent validity" (41). The *camera obscura*, with its capacity to encompass these ambiguities, became, as Crary phrases it, the "precarious figurative resolution" of a fundamentally paradoxical epistemology (41).

For Locke, the resolution of this ambiguity required a degree of self-repression in the observer that would guarantee a transcendently objective perspective

uncompromised by the vagaries of subjective response. To establish the authority of this observer Locke added to the camera obscura model the overlapping idea of the mind as a "presence room." According to Locke, sense data are transmitted "from without to their Audience in the Brain--the mind's Presence-room, (as I may so call it) . . . " (Essay II.3.1). Crary notes that, "in seventeenth-century England to be in camera" was to be "within the chambers of a judge or person of title" (42). Locke's association of the camera obscura/mind with the "presence room" of a person of authority

> gives a new juridical role to the observer within the camera obscura. Thus he modifies the receptive and neutral function of the apparatus by specifying a more self-legislative and authoritative function: the camera obscura allows the subject to guarantee and police the correspondence between exterior world and interior representation and to exclude anything disorderly or unruly. Reflective introspection overlaps with a regime of self discipline. (42-3)

Like the camera obscura/study in Fig. 10, the camera obscura/mind is the site of an authoritative observer whose observations, based on the orderly projection of sense data in camera, can be guaranteed by the disciplined purity of this perceptual/cognitive arrangement, a concept that surfaces in The Professor. Cartesian in origin, this purifying withdrawal to an interfacial interior space where the exterior world can be made orderly for its appearance in the mind's "presence room," is dependent upon a

regulatory eye which lets in only a modicum of light whereby the mind might see the images projected _in camera_. For Locke, the light of reason is as the light of a candle, a restricted but sufficient illumination:

> It will be no excuse to an idle and untoward Servant, who would not attend his Business by Candle-light, to plead that he had not broad Sun-shine. The Candle, that is set up in us, shines bright enough for all our Purposes. (_Essay_ I.1.6)

In this passage, reminiscent of St. John, whose candle-lit interior space is subverted by the moonlit dazzlement of Jane's transcendent experience (see my discussion below), Locke requires the observer to be content with the candle and not strive for the sun.[28] As Crary tells us,

> The orderly and calculable penetration of light rays through the single opening of the camera corresponds to the flooding of the mind by the light of reason, not the potentially dangerous dazzlement of the senses by the sun. (43)

Thus the apertural eye of the _camera obscura_ becomes the essential sensory agent by means of which the most reasoned apprehension of an unreasoned, manifold exterior might be achieved.

Invested with authority, the transcendental eye/mind of the _camera obscura_ also overlaps with the invisible observer whose unseen surveillance carries the _cachet_ of truth. Like the employer in Fig. 3, who is the unseen observer of his unwitting employees, the subject _in camera_ is related to the invisible but truth-discerning,

disciplinary eye/I of authority. Like the Panopticon, a related optical paradigm, the camera obscura, with its connotations of authoritative and authoritarian surveillance, links empiricist/rationalist optics to a disciplinary regime which empowers the unseen observer. Employed by Foucault as a diagram of disciplinary optics, the Panopticon, epitomized in Jeremy Bentham's model of the ideal prison,[29]

> forsook force in favour of observation and surveillance to control the prison population. That the inspector in the central tower was able to see the prisoners in the cells on the periphery without being seen by them, as well as instilling the sentiment of invisible omnipresence among the inmates, was meant to make it possible for a handful of any group of men to run a prison. (Cousins and Hussain 190)

Like the observer in camera, the inspector in the Panopticon, invisible himself, could invigilate the actions of those brought within his visual field by the optical "instrument" he and they inhabit.

In conjunction with the idea of this disciplinary optics, the camera obscura also constructs a perspectival arena in which the objects of perception are framed within a cohesive and orderly visual field reflecting the transcendent vision of God:

> The aperture of the camera obscura corresponds to a single, mathematically definable point, from which the world can be logically deduced by a progressive accumulation and combination of signs. . . . Founded on laws of nature (optics) but extrapolated to a plane outside of nature, the camera obscura provides a vantage point onto

the world analogous to the eye of God. (Crary 48)

From this God-like perspective, it was possible to impose order upon a world that might otherwise prove chaotic and intransigently unavailable to the comprehension of the mind. Speaking of the sixteenth-century camera obscura as an analogue of perspectival representation, Crary notes that the monadic viewpoint of the camera enhances the "intelligibility" of visual data by creating a framed and orderly perceptual field:

> Whether it is a question of the stage, urban design, or visual imagery, the intelligibility of a given site depends on a precisely specified relation between a delimited point of view and a tableau. . . . The camera, in a sense, was a metaphor for the most rational possibilities of a perceiver within the increasingly dynamic disorder of the world. (53)

Reflecting the omniscient vision of God, the comprehensive frame of the vista or "tableau" projected by the eye of the camera obscura represented the authoritative visual field of the transcendent observer. For the subject in camera, power resided in the capacity to encompass and rationalize the territory of the observed.

In Brontë's work, the rational/empirical subject often appears as an entrenched authority at odds with subversive, female subjects whose modes of vision and cognition challenge the dominance of the Lockean/Cartesian observer. The Professor, as I will argue, is the narrative of a "professed" authority (always in camera) whose disciplinary

vision seeks to control the unruly female objects of his regard by ordering them within the regulatory framework of his seemingly all-encompassing eye. As Heather Glen remarks in her introduction to The Professor,

> This imagery of looking and being looked at runs throughout the novel, chillingly replacing any more intimate conception of human interaction. And it points not merely to a peculiar strategy of the individual . . . but to the essential nature of the world through which he moves. In an extraordinarily precise and consistent way, Charlotte Brontë seems to be exposing and articulating the logic of a whole society--a society whose essential dynamics are the same as those that Jeremy Bentham had sought to enshrine and objectify in his great plan for a 'Panopticon' some fifty years before. (18)

In Jane Eyre, where conflicting modes of vision and cognition are more overtly engaged, the authoritarian observer can be seen in characters such as Mr.Brocklehurst, whose regulatory gaze seeks to gorgonize into objectivity the female subjects in his range of vision--a feature also evident in the freezing, "cairngorm eye" (286) of the domineering Mrs. Reed. St. John Rivers (whose intensely self-disciplined resistance to subjective, emotional response might almost be a caricature of Locke's purified, self-regulating subject) also deploys vision as a means of controlling the female subject-- particularly Jane who, under the implacably unsympathetic scrutiny of his cold blue eye is gradually frozen into immobility to become a dispensable object in the "vista" of his own salvation. In

Villette, the novel whose heresies are embedded in the politics of optical enclosure, the sovereign, Panoptic observer appears most obviously in the pensionnat where control of the female students depends on an invisible surveillance conducted _in camera_ by Madame Beck, the owner and dominant _surveillante_ of the school. Even the much more sympathetic M. Paul is not free of such spying optics, as is evident when, hidden within the enclosure of his office, he inspects, through a crack in the shutters, the goings-on in the pensionnat garden. Graham Bretton, too, is associated with a degree of visual/cognitive disinterestedness that aligns him with the Lockean observer who, eschewing subjective response, chooses instead a purely objective perspective. Where Lucy Snowe sees a revelatory vision of the actress, Vashti, Graham, with his cool, unsympathetic eye, sees nothing but a fallen woman, a brutal objectification which denies Vashti's transcendent subjectivity in the service of his own perceptual authority.

3) The Romantic _Camera Obscura_

These illustrations notwithstanding, Brontë's use of the _camera_ paradigm and its association with Lockean and Cartesian epistemology, is never simply adversarial. While she draws on these models, as she does in the examples

above, they are always modulated by and embedded in much more complex interactions. This complexity, which owes much to Brontë's subtle manipulation of visual/cognitive modes, also derives from the complex emergences of the camera obscura/diagram itself.

While the rationalist/empiricist camera was meant to figure a purified optics informed by an authoritative, transcendent eye, it was also a figure with the capacity to accommodate ambiguity and paradox. As I have noted above, the classical camera obscura, although it attempted to reconcile its anomalies, could not entirely efface the fact that, however purified its subject, the camera obscura was an essentially subjective model of vision and cognition.

If, as Jonathan Crary suggests, the camera obscura is a "precarious figurative solution" to the problem of subjectivity, it is the useful precariousness of a diagrammatic figure with multiple significations and multiple "points of emergence." As Romantic concepts of the camera obscura attest, it is precisely the camera's capacity to accommodate complexity which makes it such a powerful, multivalent paradigm. Its usefulness as a paradigm is evident in the work of Coleridge, one of the period's most influential theorizers.

In the Biographia Literaria, for instance, the camera obscura appears as a doubled and contradictory figure

signifying two types of mental apprehension. On the one hand, Coleridge uses the camera to figure a purely passive mechanics of mental apprehension which he associates with the mindless reception of the "pulp fiction" available through circulating libraries. He deplores the

> beggarly day-dreaming during which the mind of the dreamer furnishes for itself nothing but laziness and a little mawkish sensibility; while the whole material and image of the doze is supplied ab extra by a sort of mental camera obscura manufactured at the printing office, which pro tempore, fixes [,] reflects and transmits the moving phantasms of one man's delirium, so as to people the barrenness of an hundred other brains afflicted with the same trance or suspension of all common sense and definite purpose. (28)

Entirely entranced, the camera obscura/mind of the circulating library devotee can be construed as a derogatory play on the classic Lockean observer in whom the apparatus of cognition is mechanical to a fault. Later in the work, however, Coleridge employs the camera obscura as a model for the creative imagination and adapts it as a figure for an eye/mind in the grip of a unifying, poetic inspiration. According to Coleridge, a catalogue of "local imagery" presented with "minute accuracy," does not constitute a work of the imagination. Rather than relying on the accumulation of visual detail derived from external experience, the poet must "paint to the imagination" (Biographia Literaria 252). The truly imaginative work appears as a whole in a moment of inspired cohesion between

the objectivity of "local" images and the subjective vision of the poet:

> This is creation rather than painting, or if painting, yet such, and with such co-presence of the whole picture flash'd at once upon the eye, as the sun paints in the camera obscura. (Biographia Literaria 252)

Here Coleridge represents the act of imagination as a creative simultaneity of subject- and object-oriented states of perception and cognition. In this camera obscura, observer and observed are fused in an interior "tableau" which represents, not just the objects of perception transmitted by a neutral eye into an empty chamber, but the generative action of the mind itself. Self and other are inscribed within a "picture" that paradoxically contains both subject and object in its representational field.[30]

In bringing the creative action of the mind/eye to light in the camera obscura, Coleridge refigures the camera to represent a vision and cognition which acknowledges and accommodates imaginative perception. According to Coleridge, the "despotism of the eye," ushered in by rationalist/empirical philosophers like Locke, was invidious because it denied truth value to anything which could not be seen by the bodily eye:[31]

> [U]nder this strong sensuous influence we are restless because invisible things are not the objects of vision; and metaphysical systems, for the most part, become popular not for their truth but in proportion as they attribute to causes a susceptibility of being seen, if only our visual organs were sufficiently powerful. (62)

What the classical model of mind fails to account for, in short, is the subjectively based, visionary optics, which Coleridge includes in his adaptation of the camera obscura. In Coleridge's text, the camera obscura functions as a complex figuration which refers to Lockean mechanics while also accommodating the subjective, imagining eye/I as the ontological source of creative cognition. Here, the camera appears, not as a unified figure, but as a complexity, a polysemous figure that need not align itself absolutely with the classical camera obscura. Instead, Coleridge's construction of a creative camera/mind suggests that the camera obscura can figure creative subjectivity as readily as it can figure the rationalized, objective observer of the classical camera.

As Coleridge's use of the camera obscura model suggests, the issue of a subject-oriented vision and cognition was crucial in terms of the Romantic resistance to classical models of mind. John Héraud, writing in 1830, considers this issue to be central to theories concerning aesthetic creation. Citing an example from DeQuincey's Confessions, (a work with which Brontë was familiar),[32] in which DeQuincey describes the "power of painting . . . upon the darkness all sorts of phantoms" (61), Héraud insists on the validity of subjectively generated images produced in the "creative state of the eye" (62). According to Héraud

there are

> faculties existent in fancy and imagination, which amount almost to a power of creation, and which might be, by no extravagant hyperbole, denominated . . . another faculty of the eye . . . (61)

Referring to Locke's concept of the mind as a blank slate impressed by outward perceptions, Héraud reverses this order and suggests that vision is not neutral but is informed by "antecedent" patterns inherent in the subject:

> [T]hus the creation of the poet is but the bodying forth, from "the airy nothing" of the "thing unknown," the corporeal image of the secret (the archetypal) idea in the mysterious recesses of the mind, the seat of the soul, the temple of the spirit which is an efflux of divine effulgence. (60)

In place of the transparent eye and noumenal subject of the rationalist/empiricist camera, the Romantic eye/mind in Coleridge and Héraud, proposes an observer whose patent subjectivity is made transcendent through divine inspiration. By overlaying Héraud's construction of a subjective eye/mind with Coleridge's figuration of the camera obscura, it is possible to see that certain overlapping concepts are inherent in both.

In the Romantic account of mind, exemplified in Coleridge and Héraud, vision and cognition are related to the classical camera obscura/mind but with significant and challenging modifications. While in the classical model the camera obscura is the figural vehicle of a subject

whose purified, rationalized vision invests only the clearly seen with truth value, the Romantic _camera obscura_, with its "creating eye," values what cannot be seen in the external object-world. Coleridge, for instance, not only implicates the subject in the act of seeing; he also proposes, through his double use of the _camera obscura_, a complex sight which sees _and_ envisions (a concept that becomes an important theme in _Jane Eyre_). Interestingly, the mechanical _camera obscura_, which figures the "beggarly daydreaming" of the circulating-library reader, is an entirely subjective version of the Lockean model. Here, the transparent eye of the _camera_ is not presented as a transmitter of objective data but as the agent of subjective projection. What is transferred "_ab extra_" is the "daydreaming" of one mind into the somnolent mind of another. There is in this figure the notion that self-created or "phantom" data can, like Locke's externally derived "ideas," impress themselves as phenomena on the mind out of which they arise. Like DeQuincy, who acknowledges the paradoxical "reality" of phantoms "painted" by the mind in its own "dark" space, Coleridge gives truth value (however derogatory his purpose) to purely subjective "ghost" data, projected and developed in the _camera obscura_ of the mind.

If any author could identify with such phantom

"realities," it would be Brontë. In her, the "creating eye" was so powerful, it could conjure visible ghosts. For instance, in the Roe Head Journal, she writes, with some awareness of DeQuincey:

> [T]he toil of the day succeeded by this moment of divine leisure had acted on me like opium and was coiling about me a disturbed but fascinating spell such as I never felt before. What I imagined grew morbidly vivid. I remember I quite seemed to see with my bodily eyes a lady standing in the hall of a gentleman's house as if waiting for someone. (qtd. in Gérin 105-6)

Although such a "morbid" propensity for ghost-seeing would later be ironized in Villette, this power of envisioning an imagined "reality" was invaluable when Brontë wrote about experiences beyond her ken. Gaskell describes how Brontë relied on imaginative vision in the creation of the opium scene in that novel:

> I asked her whether she had ever taken opium, as the description given of its effects in "Villette" was so exactly like what I had experienced,--vivid exaggerated presence of objects, of which the outlines were indistinct, or lost in golden mist &c. She replied, that she had never, to her knowledge, taken a grain of it in any shape, but that she had followed the process she always adopted when she had to describe anything which had not fallen within her own experience; she had thought intently on it for many and many a night before falling to sleep,--wondering what it was like, or how it could be,--till at length, sometimes after the progress of her story had been arrested at this one point for weeks, she wakened up in the morning with all clear before her, as if she had in reality gone through the experience, and then could describe it, word for word, as it had happened. (508-9)

For such a writer, visual perception could never be conceived as a purely passive faculty unconditioned by the activity of an imagining mind and eye. Certainly in Jane Eyre, the imagining eye/mind is inscribed as the source of Jane's visionary paintings. In describing her art to Rochester, Jane affirms the entire subjectivity of her images:

> The subjects had indeed risen vividly on my mind. As I saw with the spiritual eye, before I attempted to embody them, they were striking; but my hand would not second my fancy, and in each case it had wrought out but a pale portrait of the thing I had conceived. (153)

Jane, while she laments her lack of artistic skill, insists on the vividness of those visual creations which are "conceived" and born in the mind itself. She insists, moreover, on the "reality" of the images produced by the "spiritual eye" which, like Héraud's "creating eye," is informed by the divinely inspired power of genius. Here, the "morbidly vivid realizations" of the Roe Head Journal are transformed and given status as essential elements of the creative mind. As in Coleridge and Héraud, the eye in Brontë is not conceived as a purely neutral mechanism, but is placed firmly at the service of the imagining mind.

There is, then, in the camera of the mind, an inner transcendence which does not efface itself, as in the classical camera obscura, but asserts itself through a virtual eye/mind whose "realizations" carry as much truth

value as the objectively directed vision of the Lockean _camera_. As the Romantic revision of the mind/eye wishes to affirm, the _camera obscura_ is always haunted by a virtual eye which directs itself to an otherwise unseen "reality." Moreover, this virtual order of vision and cognition has always been associated with the _camera obscura_ on an instrumental level. Giovanni Battista della Porta, for instance, became infamous for his use of the _camera obscura_ as a device of illusion:

> It is said that [della Porta] made a huge "camera" in which he seated his guests, having arranged for a group of actors to perform outside so that the visitors could observe the images on the wall. The story goes, however, that the sight of the upside-down performing images was too much for the visitors; they panicked and fled, and Battista was later brought to court on a charge of sorcery! (Leggat 2)

Here, the _camera obscura_ becomes the site of cheating illusions whose "real" virtuality scandalously and frighteningly apes the objectively "true" images of the rational _camera_.

In the nineteenth century, although there was no longer much danger of arrest for the practice of sorcery, the _camera obscura_ continued to be associated with the manufacturing of a virtual reality that could create a convincing illusion of objective truth. John Hammond refers to a report in a nineteenth-century American journal, of a device which has much in common, not only

with della Porta's box of tricks but with modern cinematic illusions as well:

> "Among recent inventions is the application of the camera obscura to a railroad car, imparting to the travelling and wondering beholder a moving, diminutive picture of the country through which he is passing." (cited in Hammond 132)

The camera obscura is also associated with the "magic lantern" (a device which enters the discourse of Jane Eyre) and which could, like the camera obscura, be used to project images of an illusory reality. It is in the magic lantern, in particular, that Crary sees a challenge to the truth claims of the camera obscura. As Crary correctly observes,

> Just as perspective contained within it the disruptive possibilities of anamorphoses . . . so the veracity of the camera was haunted by its proximity to techniques of conjuration and illusion. The magic lantern that developed alongside the camera obscura had the capacity to appropriate the setup of the latter and subvert its operation by infusing its interior with reflected and projected images using artificial light. (33)

Thus, as a paradigm and instrument, the camera obscura tends to be an ambiguous figure with a complex relationship to the idea of perceptual and cognitive truth. On the one hand, it is the instrument and model of an observer whose validity depends on a neutral eye which can guarantee, by its neutrality, the objective "truth" of its perceptions. On the other hand, the camera obscura is also the instrument and model of an observer whose eye is patently

not neutral, either because it can envision phantoms or because it can conjure an illusory reality that is scandalously bereft of any regulatory mechanism which might guarantee a stable, fixed relationship between observer and exterior world. Always, there is the possibility that the observer _in camera_ may be perceiving, wittingly or unwittingly, the virtual "reality" of an illusory "presence." It is a possibility which Rochester, who is disguised as a gipsy, suggests and embodies when, during the Ingrams' visit (which he stages in order to delude Jane), he asks Jane how she is enjoying the "magic lantern" show he has provided for her:

> I wonder what thoughts are busy in your heart during all the hours you sit in yonder room with the fine people flitting before you like shapes in a magic-lantern: just as little sympathetic communion passing between you and them, as if they were really mere shadows of human forms and not the actual substance. (247-8)

Thus, the observer structured by the _camera obscura_ is always potentially transgressive in the sense that the classical, regulatory relationship between eye and world is overlapped by the possibility of a deregulating, generative subjectivity with the capacity to create what it sees. The _camera obscura_ is, in effect, a model that can accommodate contradictory subject-positions and can thereby allow a degree of dialogic play which subverts without entirely effacing the totemic authority of the classical _camera_

<u>obscura</u>. Perhaps the most striking example of such play is Horace Walpole's account of his own portable <u>camera obscura</u> which he describes as a wonderful transmutation of the objective and the subjective:

> This is but a codicil to my last, but I forgot to mention in it a new discovery that charms me more than Harlequin did at ten years old, and will bring all paradise before your eyes more perfectly than you can paint it to the good women of your parish. . . . Sir Joshua Reynolds and West are gone mad with it, and it will be their own faults if they do not excel Rubens in light and shade, and all the Flemish masters in truth. It improves the beauty of trees,--I don't know what it does not do--everything for me, for I can have every inside of every room here drawn minutely in the size of this page. . . . The perspectives of the house . . . are miraculous in this camera. . . . The painted glass and trees that shade it are Arabian tales. This instrument will enable engravers to copy pictures with the utmost precision: and with it you may take a vase or the pattern of a china jar in a moment; architecture and trees are its greatest beauty; but I think it will perform more wonders than electricity, and yet is so simple as to be contained in a trunk that you may carry in your lap or your chaise, for there is such contrivance in that trunk that the filberd in the fairy tales which held such treasures was a fool to it. In short it is terrible to be three score when it is just invented; I could play with it for forty years; when will you come up and see it? I am sure you will not go back without one. (Letter to William West qtd. in Hammond 79)

For Walpole, the <u>camera</u> is a magical instrument which encompasses rooms and landscapes yet can be held in the lap like a treasure chest. While it allows the perceiver to make objectively "precise copies" of external phenomena, the <u>camera</u> is also figured as a conjuring device that can

transform reality into illusion and illusion into reality whenever the observer desires. Here, the _camera_ becomes a mechanism that both orients and pleasurably disorients the perceiver in relation to the perceived. While the viewer perceives visual images in the _camera_ with extreme accuracy and is therefore able to control and re-present them, the pictures imaged in the _camera_ also allow the viewer to inhabit the enchanted "reality" they represent. Here the interaction between observer and observed is expressed as a transgressive interplay of subjective and objective positions. While the viewer in the classical _camera obscura_ occupies a highly regulated eye/mind which represses any subjective interference, the viewer in Walpole's _camera_ is invited to play with subject positions, to enjoy the Gulliver-like inversions which turn the co-ordinates of the classical _camera obscura_ inside out. Figured as a box within a world and a world within a box, Walpole's _camera obscura_ acknowledges the mechanism of Locke's _camera_ but also inscribes a subject who delights in its deregulatory capacity for illusion and disorientation.

In "The Poetaster," a piece from Brontë's juvenilia reminiscent of Walpole's disorienting interplay of subject positions, Young Soult the Rhymer (a would-be genius) describes how subject and object can become indistinguishable once the mind admits its capacity for

illusion:

> It seemed as if I was a non-existent shadow, that I neither spoke, eat [sic], or imagined or loved of myself, but I was the mere idea of some other creature's brain. . . . [B]ut suddenly I thought again that I and my relatives did exist, and yet not us but our minds and our bodies without ourselves. Then this supposition--the oddest of any--followed the former quickly, namely, that WE without US were shadows, also, but at the end of a long vista, as it were, appeared dimly and indistinctly, beings that really lived in tangible shape, that were called by our names and were US from whom we had been copied by something--I could not tell what. (EEW 1: 257)

Here Soult experiences so many inversions of perceiver and perceived that he can no longer distinguish which phenomena he should label as "real." Like the phantoms projected in the "daydreaming" minds of Coleridge's camera, the "shadow" images of Soult's imagination have created a "shadow" subject who can no longer guarantee the truth of his own existence, let alone the verity of the objects he perceives. Brontë's playful handling of Soult's dilemma suggests that she, like Walpole, is aware of how readily subject/object, self/other, reality/fantasy can be cast loose from their binary moorings in the camera of the mind.

3) The Camera Obscura and the Sublime

The tradition of camera obscura figuration, which can accommodate the disoriented subject inscribed in this early example of Brontë's work, also accommodates the aesthetic disorientations of the sublime, as is evident in

Coleridge's use of the metaphor. Likening the operation of the imagination to the action of the sun "painting" in a <u>camera obscura</u>, Coleridge appropriates an essential element of the Lockean model of mind. The figuration of light has always been an important metaphorical factor in the relationships among I, eye and world. As Allan White comments in <u>The Uses of Obscurity</u>,

> Strange that the metaphor of light should simultaneously organize the axes of morality, knowledge and discourse. At the height of the Renaissance, a certain J. Smith (what better name for a paradigm of common usage?) wrote in his "Discourses" of "The intellectual world being . . . made all lucid, intellectual, and shining with the sunbeams of eternal truth." (13)

Sunlight, especially, was a significant lucidity associated with science and reason: " The avowed purpose of science . . . is to banish all lunar superstitions and bask in the pure light of solar reason" (Graves cited in Heilman 34). This "pure light of solar reason," is a light destined to affirm the <u>camera</u>'s rationally ordered relationship between observer and observed:

> The exemplary figures of Kepler and Newton employed the camera obscura precisely to avoid looking directly into the sun while seeking to gain knowledge of it or of the light it propagated. In Descartes's <u>La Dioptrique</u> . . . the form of the camera was a defence against the madness and unreason of dazzlement. (Crary 139)

Coleridge's sunlight, imaging a flashing moment of dazzling creative insight, differs from the light of reason which is "aligned with clear, distinct ideas or mental

images" (Mitchell 123). In Coleridge's camera, sunlight becomes significantly more intense than the rationed light that the Lockean eye conveys into the dark closet of the Lockean mind. Synthesizing the external world and creative consciousness, the light in Coleridge's camera does not transmit external phenomena to the mind's interior; it is an inner, self-generated light that spontaneously illuminates the creative I/eye. By displacing the rational subject/object differentiation of the Lockean camera with an eye/I that sees itself in the unreasoned light of its own creativity, Coleridge constructs a model of mind in which the eye of reason is blinded by the dazzling fusions of Héraud's "creating eye."

Such blindness is one of the factors which links the creative imagination with sublime experience. According to Edmund Burke, sublime vision is generated in obscurity because the blinding of the reasoning eye is necessary to achieve the symbiosis of self and world that constitutes sublime experience. Burke's Essay on the Sublime and the Beautiful, which the Brontës owned, was one of the most influential articulations of the distinction between the rhetoric of reason and the rhetoric of feeling. According to Burke,

> We do not sufficiently distinguish, in our observations upon language, between clear expression and strong expression. . . . The former regard the understanding: the latter belongs to the passions. The one describes a

> thing as it is; the latter describes it as it is felt. (600)

Burke takes into account the emotions that remain obscured in the Lockean account of vision and perception. Obscured vision, whether it is achieved by means of darkness or dazzlement, is the sensory condition which displaces the clear light of reason and encourages the emotional response which can take the perceiver beyond the rational restrictions that separate the viewer from the view. It is the disorientation of reasoned perception, aided by an extreme heightening of subjective response, that also allows the creative mind to see its affinity with God and Nature. As Burke observes,

> to make anything very terrible, obscurity seems in general to be necessary. When we know the full extent of danger, when we can accustom our eyes to it, a great deal of the apprehension vanishes. . . . Those despotic governments, which are founded on the passions of men, and principally upon the passion of fear, keep their chief as much as may be from the public eye. The policy has been the same in many cases of religion. Almost all the heathen temples were dark. . . . No person seems better to have understood the secret of heightening, or of setting terrible things, if I may use the expression, in their strongest light by the forces of a judicious obscurity, than Milton. (600)

Appropriately, the poet who explained the ways of God to man is here conceived as a master of the "judicious obscurity" that blinds the clear eye of reason yet paradoxically brings his readers within sight of God.

John Martin, a painter whose work the Brontës owned and

admired,[33] was also aware of the power of obscurity to elicit sublime response. Labelled "THE KING OF THE VAST" by Blackwood's (Alexander 193), Martin justifies his work by claiming that, because his subjects are obscured by "the mists of time," he is not committed to a scrupulously objective representation but is free to hyperbolize his vision into the dark ineffability of the sublime. As he says about his work, The Fall of Nineveh,

> The mighty cities of Nineveh and Babylon have passed away. The accounts of their greatness and splendour may have been exaggerated. But, where strict truth is not essential, the mind is content to find delight in the contemplation of the grand and the marvellous. Into the solemn vision of antiquity we look without demanding the clear daylight of the truth. Seen through the mist of ages the great becomes gigantic, the wonderful swells into the sublime. (qtd. in Johnstone 12)

In the work of this Miltonic painter of biblical scenes, the blurring of visual boundaries impels a subjective, visionary apprehension of a truth that lies beyond (or within) the mind/eye which sees only in "the clear daylight" of objective appearances. Referring always to the subjective response of the observer, the perception of the sublime engages a paradoxical blind vision which acknowledges the powerful, unseen forces within the eye/I of the creative beholder.

In her famous criticism of Jane Austen, Brontë draws on Austen's tendency to ignore the hidden, inner life in

favour of a too clear and objective view of her characters:

> [W]hat 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. (SHLL 3:99)

Here, Austen's "mind's eye" fails in its creative purpose because it fails to "see" the ineffable truth which lies at the unseen core of the subjects she studies. Focused only on what is "susceptible of being seen," Austen ignores the sublimely obscure spirit which only the subjective eye/I can envision and represent. In this validation of unreasoned, unconscious experience, Brontë inscribes a sublime (and subliminal) mode of vision which challenges the "despotism" of an eye/mind that can define itself only in terms of the objects it sees.

While sublime experience, as Martin's work indicates, is generally associated with "THE VAST," it is an experience which paradoxically refers that sense of boundlessness to the interior, that is to say, to the subject. Directed outward, sublime vision is paradoxically "contained" within the parameters of the viewing subject. As Eugenia Delamotte says of the sublime in Friedrich von Schiller's "On the Sublime," "what sets us free" in his account of consciousness is "the recognition that this

grand external force is a mirror of something in ourselves" (140). In Schiller, whose collected works the Brontës owned, what is outside in the vast is always a reflection of what is contained within. It is in this proleptic mirroring of subject and object, this disorienting shift from outer to inner, that the crux of the sublime resides.

Such disorientation in Walpole's <u>camera</u> is playful and pleasurable, but transferred to the level of the sublime this prolepsis marks a profound realization of the subjective source of external experience. This reflective interchange of inner and outer, container and contained, requires a perspectival shift that disrupts the viewer's alignments and challenges, through deregulative subjective experience, the stabilizing subject/object division on which the rational/empirical observer is based. Given that the ineffable obscurity of sublime experience is situated within as well as without, there is the possibility of a contained sublimity that registers the infinite within the finite, the uncircumscribed within the circumscribed. Certainly, Martin was credited with the capacity to render such contained infinity within the architecture of his works. As Bulwer Lytton says of him,

> [V]astness is his sphere, yet he has not lost or circumfused his genius in its space; he has wielded and measured it at will; he has translated its character into narrow limits; he has compassed the infinite itself with mathematical precision. (Lytton qtd. in Kemp 162)

This architectural sublime, most evident in Belshazzar's Feast (Fig. 11), which also hung, in print form, on the walls of Haworth Parsonage, is interesting because it represents so effectively the paradoxical capacity of enclosure to encompass endless space.

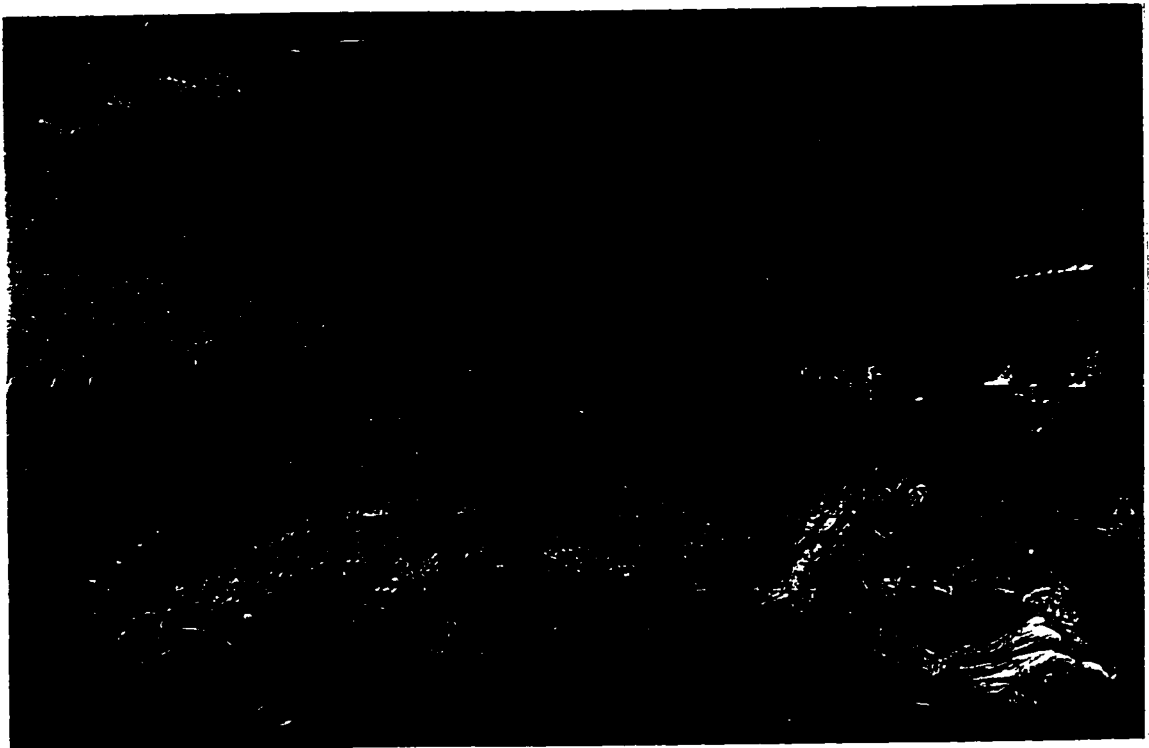


Fig. 11. John Martin. Belshazzar's Feast. Mezzotint. (1832); rpt. in Johnstone 67.

As Meisel notes, Martin's "manipulation of perspective and scale" (168), constituted what Sir Uvedale Price called "the artificial infinite as arising from uniformity and succession" (qtd. in Meisel 168). Defined yet incomprehensible, the interior of the feast-hall is as vast as the Alps, the oceans or the heavens. Within the rationalized space of its architecture, Martin inscribes a space of ineffability that is framed by yet paradoxically transcends its confinement. Here, in disorienting simultaneity, the viewer is presented with an objectively defined but subjectively transcendent experience.

Although, as I acknowledge in Chapter III, the sublime was always a highly gendered aesthetic for Brontë, she was conversant with its rhetoric and could, at an early age, deftly render a sublime scene. In a passage which Christine Alexander refers to as "Martinesque," Brontë reflects Martin's handling of architectural infinity in her description of "the new Zamorna Palace":

> It stretched indeed far away and ascended to a sublime height, but still its limits were well and clearly outlined. A mighty row of marble pillars, pale and gleaming as ice, receded in their grand perspective before me. Their eternal basements, their giant shafts, their gorgeous capitals, the long, long, high-uplifted cornice that ran above them, were all the purest, the noblest Grecian moulding. (EEW 2.2:266)

Here the classical parameters of Greek architecture embrace

an infinity of space, both aerial and subterranean. Enclosed yet infinitely expansive in its containment, the architecture of the palace draws the reader/viewer into a space that is contained by rational outlines yet paradoxically exceeds its boundaries.[34] This mental/visual space inscribed in Martin's work and in Brontë's Martinesque description, is represented by a tableau that refers to a viewer who is required to be in camera and ex camera at once, who can inhabit enclosure yet transcend the parameters of that enclosure. Like the classical architecture in Brontë's description, the classical mind is paradoxically capable of encompassing and being encompassed by a sublime subjectivity that lives within yet resists its regulatory boundaries.

As Meisel points out, a "fundamental Romantic endeavour" was to "free the sublime from material causes and correlatives and to claim it as a subjective terrain" (167). The ontology of the sublime was essentially in camera, contained within an eye/mind that defined the external in terms of internal, subjective response. Blinded by its own light, disoriented by aporic shifts from a delineated outer to an ineffable, expansive innerness, the eye/mind of the classical camera is forced, by the subjective movement of the sublime, to accommodate an infinite interiority which radically challenges the

disciplinary distinctions of its subject/object orientation. Brontë, whose early handling of the sublime is reminiscent of Martin's enclosed vastness, also came to "claim it as a subjective terrain." As is evident in her criticism of Austen, it is the ineffability of the subject which is at issue, that subjectivity at the "unseen seat of life" which "sees" blindly the creative and creating source of its own transcendence.

The sublime architecture of Zamorna's palace later translates into a more complex sublimity of which Jane Eyre provides the most striking example. Here, in this novel which epitomizes the rebellion of the Romantic subject against the constraints of the objective "real," Brontë develops a space of internal sublimity where the subject expands from within to encompass an experience which transcends the reasoned configuration of subject and object. As Robert Heilman notes, when Brontë's "characters are engaged in crucial actions," their decisions may be rational, "but the instrument of decision, the persuasive presence, may be non-rational or suprarational" (38). The scene that takes place in St. John's study when Jane first feels intimations of the supernatural "call" from Rochester is a particularly telling example of the interiorized self in a state of sublime subjectivity. Rivers is reading while "the May moon shining in through the uncurtained

window [renders] almost unnecessary the light of the candle on the table" (532). As the intensity mounts, moonlight expands and possesses the room just as emotion swells and possesses Jane:

> The one candle was dying out: the room was full of moonlight. My heart beat fast and thick: I heard its throb. Suddenly it stood still to an inexpressible feeling that thrilled it through, and passed at once to my heat and extremities. The feeling was not like an electric shock; but it was quite as sharp, as strange, as startling: it acted on my senses as if their utmost activity hitherto had been but torpor; from which they were now summoned and forced to wake. They rose expectant: eye and ear waited, while the flesh quivered on my bones. (535-6)

Here, the moon (operating as an analogue of unreasoned solar dazzlement) contributes to a growing obscurity in which sensory function is suspended in a state of hyperperceptive anticipation. Eclipsed by the swelling light of the moon, the light of reason no longer gives access to objective phenomena. The avenues of sense are usurped for the purposes of the supernatural. Unlike the small, controlled ray which pierces the Lockean chamber of the mind, this moon fills the chamber with a non-rational flood of light. It is an illumination that transmits no images but heightens sensation so that feeling rather than observation is uppermost.

Moonlight was, for Brontë, an "aesthetic objectification of an "inner light' transformed into "universal illumination" (Heilman 47). It is a brilliance

that blinds the eye to the observation of the external real but reveals an ineffable, universal truth which cannot be "pictured" within the constraints of rational vision. Thus, for the Brontë of Jane Eyre, the camera of the sublime subject is the site of a contained expansion that allows inner to embrace outer in a disorienting moment of transcendent blindness.

As Lyndall Gordon emphasizes, the influence of Romanticism on Brontë was directed towards freedom from the reductive spaces of a rationalized selfhood. Referring to the influence of Byron who, in Meisel's view, was one of the foremost proponents of the "subjective sublime" (169), Gordon emphasizes the impact of Romantic subjectivity on Brontë's own orientation towards the shape of selfhood:

> The great verbal power that was to emerge in Charlotte Brontë . . . came from an extraordinary liberty to transgress the frontiers of feeling which is commonly silenced--to the degree that words for such feeling hardly exist--and it is obvious that this liberty was the fruit of the Romantic movement. (31)

For Brontë, this transgressive subjectivity would become the vehicle of her resistance to male models of selfhood. As Gordon observes, "where the speakers for Romanticism were almost invariably men, her books claimed this range for women, and in a way that eventually proved far from imitative." Brontë's "eloquence would combine, later with a hidden range of passions in new models of

womanhood . . . " (31). Thus, for Brontë, the subjective _camera_ of the Romantic mind would become the "space" of a transgressive, female subject who remained uninscribed in the creative eye/I of masculine Romantic discourse.

Certainly the claim of subjectivity, passion and creativity against the restrictions of reason is a leitmotif in her work. Heilman observes that the "conflict between reason-judgement-common sense and feeling-imagination-intuition" was a "conflict which lasted through Charlotte's life as an artist" (38). Even as late as _Villette_, the struggle of a "hidden range of passions" against the cool rationalism of non-subjective response, remains central. For Lucy Snowe, the inner conflict between reason and feeling is one that must continually be negotiated lest subjectivity appear too transgressive and disruptive:

> These struggles with the natural character, the strong native bent of the heart, may seem futile and fruitless, but in the end they do good. They tend, however slightly, to give the actions, the conduct, that turn which Reason approves, and which Feeling perhaps, too often opposes. (224)

For Brontë, the space of the subject becomes the site _in camera_ where the disruptions of passion and the regulatory regimes of reason are enacted. Like the Romantics, she resists the externally directed eye/I in favour of an entirely self-enclosed interchange that encompasses the object world within the

perceptual/cognitive movements of the subject. In Brontë, as in Romantic configurations of the observer, the eye of imagination and passion envisions, in the expansions of the sublime, the hidden, transcendent sources of creation invisible to the Lockean eye. Whereas the classical camera posits an observer whose sight is regulated by the coordinates of see-er and seen, the inner subjective action of the Romantic/Brontëan self is inscribed as a contained mutability that fails to align itself rigidly in relation to the object of sight. Instead, there is always the possibility of slippage, of expansion and inversion, which might defy the frame of the classical observer and gesture towards the subversively unregulated subjectivity that haunts the Lockean camera.

4) Closeting the Body: Realism, Materialism and the Subject In Camera

While Brontë's work is deeply informed by Romanticism, it is also modified by the requirements of realism. As Gérin points out, for all Brontë's seclusion at Haworth, she still maintained contact with the outside world. Although the Arabian Nights and Tales of the Genii fired the imagination of young Brontës, the children also devoured periodicals and newspapers and took a keen interest in contemporary issues. Brontë did not live a life completely

dominated by imaginary beings. As a child she was given

> the opportunity . . . to evolve simultaneously on two planes: a child still, believing in fairies and the eastern genii, yet grasping the significance of contemporary politics and taking an adult's interest in the world about her. (Gérin 30)

Brontë also sought to control the imagination that, when uncontrolled, could lead to frightening, hallucinatory visions. Her "Farewell to Angria," in which she announces her intention to leave the overheated Romanticism of her juvenilia, is an attempt to resist the too-persistent images of that imaginary region:

> I have now written a great many books and for a long time I have dwelt upon the same characters and scenes and subjects. . . . but we must change, for the eye is tired of the picture so oft recurring and now so familiar.
>
> Yet do not urge me too fast, reader; it is no easy theme to dismiss from my imagination the images which have filled it so long; they were my friends and my intimate acquaintances. . . . when I depart from these I feel almost as if I stood on the threshold of home and were bidding farewell to its inmates. When I strive to conjure up new images I feel as if I had got into a distant country where every face was unknown and the character of the population an enigma which it would take much study to comprehend and much talent to expound. Still, I long to quit for a while that burning clime where we have sojourned for too long--its skies flame--the glow of sunset is always upon it--the mind would cease from excitement and turn now to a cooler region where the dawn breaks grey and sober, and the coming day for a time at least is subdued by clouds. (qtd. in Ratchford 149)

In the "Farewell," Brontë registers the pressure to give up romance in favour of the "cooler region" of reality

which it will take "much study to comprehend and much talent to expound." For Brontë the relationship between romance and realism is a highly ambivalent one. As this passage suggests, to cross the threshold from romance to realism requires an adjustment in attitude towards the too-seductive pleasures of the imagination and a commitment to a new and demanding style of expression with its own aesthetic protocols. By committing herself to that pre-eminently realistic genre, the novel, Brontë also committed herself to a shift from the familiar regions of romance (whose illusory characters had become her "reality") to a more disciplined, objective "study" of that unknown, "distant country," the objective world outside her imagination.

Yet, despite this commitment, Brontë always maintained a relativistic attitude towards realism which allowed her to register the pressures of the real while acknowledging the validity of subjective response. This complex approach to the structure of the real was noticed by G.H. Lewes who, in his review of Jane Eyre for Fraser's Magazine, makes the penetrating observation that Brontë's

> faculty for objective representation is . . . united to a strange power of subjective representation. We do not simply mean the power over the passions, but the power also of connecting external appearances with internal effects--of representing the psychological interpretation of material phenomena" (qtd. in Evans and Lloyd, Companion to the Brontës 86).

Lewes's definition of Brontë as a writer who could put subjective response in play within the parameters of objective observation suggests that Brontë's relationship to realism was complex. While exhibiting a "faculty for objective representation," Brontë does not naturalize the representation of the external real at the expense of the imagining mind and eye. Rather, she constructs realism as a mode which may hide but cannot efface the demands and desires of the subject. Brontë's discourse thus allows for the interplay of Romantic subjectivism and realist objectivism which George Levine places at the heart of realist aesthetic strategy:

> Committed to "treat things as they are and not as the story teller would like them to be for his convenience," realists assume the possibility of making the distinction and thus save meaning at the sacrifice of pleasure. Realism further complicates itself because in requiring a continuing alertness to the secret lust of the spirit to impose itself on the world . . . and in resisting the romance forms that embody those lusts, it is always on the verge of another realism: the recognition that the reality it most adequately represents is a subtly disguised version of its own desires. (15)

Here we are dealing, not with a single, graspable style we can label realism, but with a dynamic interaction in which the concept of "realism is defined also by what it represses: the "secret lust of the spirit to impose itself on the world." Realism becomes a matter of controlling romance, while romance continually asserts itself through

the registration of its suppression.

It is in this complex dialogue between realism's requirement to "treat things as they are" and the subversive requirements of Romanticism's subjective desires that Brontë positions herself. The fact that she was well aware of the competing demands of romance and realism is evident in her introduction to The Professor. Describing the tribulations of her first and least respected novel, she wryly expresses her bafflement over its rejection. Despite her efforts to follow the tenets of realism by eschewing "ornamented and redundant composition" in favour of what was plain and homely," and by creating a hero who was to "work his way through life" as "real living men work theirs" (3), the book did not find favour with the publishers:

> Indeed, until an author has tried to dispose of a manuscript of this kind, he can never know that stores of romance and sensibility lie hidden in breasts he would not have suspected of casketing such treasures. Men in business are usually thought to prefer the real; on trial the ideal will often be found fallacious: a passionate preference for the wild, wonderful and thrilling--the strange startling and harrowing--agitates divers souls that show a calm and sober surface. (3)

Beneath the "calm and sober" surface of those who "prefer the real" lies a "casketed" desire for the "wild, wonderful and thrilling." Like Lucy Snowe--who symbolically buries her feelings for Graham Bretton when she buries his letters

in a ceremony that affirms her resistance to such illicit passions--these proponents of the real reveal, through their suppressions, the "passionate preferences" that realism is designed to circumvent. As her Preface to _The Professor_ suggests, "realism" is a complex matter which involves, not only a command of "objective representation," but a sensitivity to the subjective, hidden desires which realism is designed to repress. For Brontë, the concept of the real is embedded in the notion that realism is haunted by an illicit subjectivity which is always present to challenge the co-ordinates of "objective representation."

Certainly her response to critical remarks by Lewes, who closes his review of _Jane Eyre_ by remarking on its "improbable" elements, makes explicit her reservations concerning the objective postures of realistic representation.

> You warn me to beware of melodrama, and you exhort me to adhere to the real. . . . You advise me . . . not to stray far from the ground of experience, as I become weak when I enter the region of fiction; and you say "real experience is perennially interesting, and to all men."
>
> I feel that this is also true; but, dear sir, is not the real experience of each individual very limited? . . . Then, too, imagination is a strong, restless faculty, which claims to be heard and exercised: are we to be quite deaf to her cry, and insensate to her struggles? When she shows us bright pictures, are we never to look at them, and try to reproduce them? And when she is eloquent and speaks rapidly and urgently in our ear, are we not to write to her dictations? (_SHLL_ 2:152-3)

Here Brontë makes it clear that, while she understands and approves, to some extent, the principles Lewes is advocating, she also asserts the legitimacy of imagination and invention. She suggests that fiction is a product of the imagining mind, and that the gift and business of a creative writer is to envision something less narrow than "real experience." Brontë is diplomatically but incisively telling Lewes that he cannot brand "invention" as illegitimate without denying one principal source of all fiction--even fiction that claims to be a faithful representation of reality. In fact, she waxes quite Coleridgean when she tells Lewes that the accurate "painting" of material reality cannot eclipse (and even relies upon) imagination's "bright pictures."

Brontë's and Lewes's reference to the "painting" of phenomena, either objective or subjective, recalls the visually based construction of subject/object relations in rationalist/empiricist epistemology and Romantic aesthetics. Its appearance in the aesthetics of realism is no accident because the eye and its scopic field had as much to do with the construction of the subject and the object in the nineteenth century as it had in earlier periods.[35] One of the most potent strategies in realist fiction is an appeal to vision as the faculty that has privileged access to an objective reality external to the

observer. As Levine points out, realist works often reflect "the sheer pleasure of being able to _see_, as though for the first time, the clutter of furniture, the cut of clothing, the mutton chop and the mug of hot rum. . ." (21). This inscription of sight into the discourse of realism is the result of realism's need to generate plausible analogies that convincingly associate its texts with a reality that "is not ourselves and not merely language" (Levine 4). As W.J.T. Mitchell asserts in his discussion of concepts used to differentiate words and visual images:

> The image is the sign that pretends not to be a sign, masquerading as (or for the believer actually achieving) natural immediacy and presence. The word is its "other," the artificial, arbitrary production of human will that disrupts natural presence by introducing unnatural elements into the world--time, consciousness, history, and the alienating intervention of symbolic mediation.(43)

The image, particularly in an era which valued the "accurate painting" of life and nature, has the authority of a mimetic showing which seems to eliminate the intrusions of narrative wordplay and the disruptions of subjective intervention. It is this guaranteed correspondence between external object and representation that keeps the _camera obscura_ and the rationalized space of the Lockean observer such a compelling paradigm in the structure of aesthetic "reality." As I will argue in the

chapter on <u>The Professor</u>, Brontë deliberately plays on the capacity of the <u>camera</u> to figure the seeming stability of the Lockean observer whose rationalized eye can guarantee the objective "truth" of its aesthetic representations. When, for instance, Crimsworth draws verbal portraits of his Belgian students, he insists that these derogatory descriptions are unromanticized, accurate portrayals of "real" girls: "Let the idealists--the dreamers about earthly angels and human flowers, just look here, while I open my portfolio and shew them a sketch or two, pencilled after nature" (97). Because they are naturalized within the frame of his neutrally observant eye, the "drawings" in his portfolio can represent a reality unmediated by subjective desires.

However, in Brontë's case, the idea of the neutral eye and its naturalized images is never a simple referral to the rationalized observer in the classical mode, but is interwoven in the dynamic interplay of objective and subjective which shapes the realism of her novels. For Brontë, the structure of the observer is informed by rational/empiricist models which, modulated through Romanticism, are reinscribed in the restrictions and repressions of a self-reflexive realism.

Where the Lockean <u>camera</u> housed a magisterial observer whose transcendent vision fixed both subject and object in

a stable, purified relationship that guaranteed the authenticity of vision, the space of the realistic observer is modified by the pressures of the material and the social. As Levine says:

> The primary conventions of realism are its deflation of ambition and passion, . . . its tendency to see all people and things within large containing social organizations and, hence its apparently digressive preoccupation with surfaces, things, particularities, social manners. (15)

Realism's construction of the observer gestures back towards the stabilities and restrictions of the authoritative Lockean viewer, but it also acknowledges, in its specific concern for the objecthood of objects, the materiality of what is seen. In realist discourse, the rationalized real of the Lockean observer overlaps with bourgeois materialism to produce a mode of vision that validates the visual ownership of the material object as evidence of the observer's power.

In fact, another image of the camera obscura, which occurs in Marx's German Ideology,[36] is intended to expose and invalidate the ideology of bourgeois materialism:

> If in all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside-down as in a camera obscura, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life-process (47)

Here Marx relies on but also modifies empiricist premises by including the agency of history or "life-process" as

having an impact on the structure of selfhood. In particular, he is challenging "the 'German' ideology of the Young Hegelians who thought that revolution could occur at the level of consciousness, ideas, and philosophy without a material revolution in social life" (Mitchell 167):

> That is to say, we do not set out from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as narrated, thought of, imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at men in the flesh. We set out from real, active, men, and on the basis of their real life-process we demonstrate that development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life-process. The phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premises. (Marx 47)

Marx's use of the camera obscura is problematical,[37] but it illustrates how the camera can function as an indicator of the phantomic nature of the materialistic "reality" of bourgeois society. As an instrument, the camera obscura was, in itself, an indicator of the false ideology of bourgeois society:

> All the claims about scientific accuracy would have left him cold next to the plain fact that the camera was a leisure-class toy, a machine for producing new "collector's items," portraits of well-to-do burghers, views of country houses, lady's amusements and that it was being produced by and for leisured gentlemen who could afford the luxury of "floating philosophical visions." The idea that such toys could provide a serious model for human understanding must have struck him as ludicrous. (Mitchell 172)

But, for all its "ludicrous" associations, the camera

obscura was also "appropriate as a model of false understanding, that is, for ideology" (Mitchell 172):

> This is the point Marx captures in his stress on ideology as a kind of optical inversion. In one sense, the inversion makes no difference at all; the illusion is perfect. Everything is in the proper relation to everything else. But from a contrary point of view the world is upside down, in chaos, revolution, mad with self-destructive contradictions. (Mitchell 172)

While there is no evidence that Brontë read Marx, she was certainly aware of the ideology or "perfect illusion" of the patriarchal, bourgeois society in which she lived and wrote. From this standpoint, the "theatrics" of cognition which I assign to Brontë's work can also be seen as a kind of inversion of bourgeois realism and its attendant concept of masculine ownership of the female self. Rochester's illusionistic theatrics, the "shadow play" with which he attempts to delude Jane, is an example of an "ideology" that assumes Jane is his to acquire and own. Villette deals even more directly with bourgeois ideology in its anti-ontological explosion of materialistic and masculinist concepts of the female self. By theatricalizing the "materiality" of self-construction, Lucy also accomplishes a revolutionary inversion of a patriarchal bourgeois realism. Although I emphasize Crimsworth as a rationalistic proponent of a masculine hegemony, Brontë contextualizes Crimsworth as a man who must "work his way through life" (3), and constructs him as

a participant in a "life process"[38] that requires the postures he assumes. In her inversion of those postures through the subversive enactments of Frances Henri, Brontë exposes the ideology of male ownership to which Crimsworth has fallen prey.[39]

In Brontë, the force of the real, which contains the subversive expansions of the Romantic subject, is often identified as a material enclosure which houses the ineffable subject. Such materialist constructions of the observer in camera are most evident in Villette, the novel which is Brontë's most thoroughgoing exploration of bourgeois materialism and its effects on the female self. In one of the more telling passages in the novel, Lucy compares her own expansive, unregulated selfhood to the highly structured containment of Graham Bretton's materialist self-architecture:

> Graham's thoughts of me were not entirely those of frozen indifference, after all. I believe in that goodly mansion, his heart, he kept one little place under the skylights where Lucy might have entertainment if she chose to call. It was not so handsome as the chambers where he lodged his male friends; it was not like the hall where he accommodated his philanthropy or the library where he treasured his science, still less did it resemble the pavilion where his marriage feast was splendidly spread; yet, gradually, by long and equal kindness, he proved to me that he kept one little closet over the door of which was written "Lucy's Room." I kept a place for him too--a place of which I never took the measure, either by rule or compass: I think it was like the tent of Peri-Banou. All my life I carried it folded in the hollow of my hand--yes, released from that hold and constriction, I know not but

> its innate capacity for expanse might have magnified it into a tabernacle for a host (572).

Reminiscent of the contained sublimity of Martin's Belshazzar's Feast, this containment of Lucy's "expansive" self is related to a specifically bourgeois framework. As Tony Tanner notes, Lucy articulates here

> the existence of psychic and emotional areas which cannot be contained within, areas gestured towards by images of the nomadic and the sacred. The bourgeois mind, like the bourgeois house, operates by measure, rule and compass. (15)

In place of the "measure, rule and compass" of the Lockean/Cartesian observer, we have the regulatory stabilities of a materialistic, social architecture which determines the space and orientations of the bourgeois observer.

What concerns me here are the terms of empowerment and resistance that Brontë has incorporated in the construction of these two subjectivities. Here the materialist/rationalist subject is rendered in terms of a substantial and orderly house/container which, apart from its size and material richness, bears some resemblance to the orderly containment of the Lockean closet. Graham's "goodly mansion" represents the space of a subject who owns, and defines through its hierarchical order, the objects of his psychic/emotional apprehension. It is against this material/rational containment that Lucy sets a subjective sublimity that defies such boundaries. What

works against her subjective expansion is the power exerted by a cognitive structure that invests not only in the rational regulation of observer and observed, but in the material control of the objects it contains.

Interestingly, it is at the interface of the material and the rational that Crary locates the "decisive rupture" which led to the submergence of the _camera obscura_ model:

> My concern is how the individual as observer became an object of investigation and a locus of knowledge beginning in the first few decades of the 1800s, and how the status of the observing subject was transformed. . . . [A] key object of study in the empirical sciences then was subjective vision, a vision that had been taken out of the incorporeal relations of the camera obscura and relocated in the human body. (16)

Here Crary wishes to make an absolute distinction between the rationalized space of the _camera obscura_ and the material, embodied space of the non-Cartesian viewer. However, as the architecture of Graham's highly realized bourgeois mansion suggests, the idea of the _camera_ is not inconsistent with the idea of materiality. In fact, for Brontë, the body, mind and eye are continually modulated through spatialized scenes of containment and control. In Brontë's novels, where enclosure is paradigmatic, the embodiment of the object, the materiality of the thing perceived, is something that is constructed _in camera_. It is structured within the space that, like the "presence room" of the Lockean closet, becomes the site of an

empowered owner/subject who stands over against the disempowering materiality of the perceptually "owned" object.

In Jane Eyre, for instance, what Lucy Snowe will later call the "rude Real" comes in the shape of John Reed, the heir to Gateshead, who positions Jane as the object of his punishingly material regard. In his attempt to declare ownership of his space and the objects in it (including Jane), he commandeers the parameters of the room so that his objectifying visual strategy will coincide with the physical control of a vulnerably embodied Jane.[40] Unlike Jane, who finds pleasure in the imaginary world of books to which she retreats in the window-seat, John is committed to a purely external reality. "[N]ot quick either of vision or perception," John is more interested in the fleshly side of life. He "gorge[s] himself habitually at table," a habit which results in a "bleared eye and flabby cheek" (6). Blind to the subjective manifestations of experience, John is a complete materialist confined to a world that can only present itself as an array of objects available for consumption.

"[L]arge and stout for his age" (6), John is himself an incarnation of the materialistic vision which he applies not only to his food but to Jane. Discovering Jane in the window-seat, he forces her out of this camera of the

imagination, places her in his room, and proceeds to apply the "rule" and "compass" of his ownership. He tells her: "Now I'll teach you to rummage my bookshelves: for they are mine; all the house belongs to me, or will do in a few years" (7-8). He then orders Jane to "stand by the door out of the way of the mirror and the windows" (8). Visually she is carefully placed within his house where his objectifying power comes into play with a vengeance. Jane is put where John can hurt her--with the very book that she is using as a form of escape. Transformed from a vehicle of the imagination into a material object, "the volume was flung, it hit me, and I fell, striking my head against the door and cutting it" (8). Here John places Jane in a space where his perspective and orientation prevail. Contained and clearly visible within his room, Jane becomes embodied and available to John in his crude world of material violence. As it is enacted in the *camera* of John's magisterial control, visual accessibility is associated with an accessible but hostile material reality antagonistic to the desires of the imagining subject. John Reed's materialism (as his name, signifying weakness and ephemerality, implies) is ironically revealed by his early and sordid death as something less substantial than Jane's creative vision, a circumstance that can be read as an "inversion" of the bourgeois eye/I. This moment, however,

when John's powers are in play, epitomizes the brutalized physicality with which his objective eye impresses on Jane the pressure of the "rude Real."

Brontë's overlapping of the room with the politics of visual and material ownership can be seen as another "emergence" of the camera obscura. Here a gendered realism figures the rationalized subject/object arrangement of the Lockean camera as an empowering and disempowering enclosure where male subjecthood and female objecthood are enacted. In Brontë's realism, the rationalist/materialist observer in camera appropriates the parameters of the camera in the service of an authority whose purpose it is to objectify, materialize and thereby control the female subject. Thus, in Brontë's construction of the scene enacted at Gateshead, the idea of the camera as a visual/cognitive space overlaps with the actual room and the material presences of the bodies it contains. Informed by the pressures of bourgeois realism, this interior space becomes the site of an embodiment which inscribes in the camera the materiality of the body and the actuality of the room in which it is contained.

This conflation of body, room, and psychic spaces shows two intersecting aspects of the camera obscura which challenge Crary's contention that the camera obscura cannot figure the embodiment of the observer: the camera-as-room

and the _camera_-as-body. An erotic example of such conflation (although it occurs in what Crary would call the _camera_'s "classical" period) is Richardson's reference to the _camera obscura_: "The subjects we are upon, courtship and marriage, cannot, I find, be talked of seriously by a Lady, before company. Shall I retire with you to solitude? Make a Lover's Camera Obscura for you?" (98). Here the epistemology of Locke's "dark closet" is informed by an erotic embodiment which overlays the site of the _camera_ with the private space of the body; and the figuration of the classical _camera obscura_ is intersected by the idea of the body which has apertures other than the eye, and sexual desires unaccommodated in Locke's closet. In Richardson, the image of the _camera_ encompasses both the private lovers and the lover's private parts: the hidden, perforated sites where desire is generated and satisfied.

Thus the _camera_, even in its classical period, could signal, not only the purified and rationalized observer of the Lockean _camera_, but also the embodiment and physicality of being. As my earlier reference to Lakoff and Johnson suggests, the idea of enclosure has always been and continues to be associated with vision as well as with bodily boundaries and enclosures. Eve Sedgwick, in her discussion of the connotations of the closet, also implies that the idea of the closet transects not only cognitive

references but also references to the body and the rooms in which bodily functions as well as cognitive functions are accommodated. In her list of meanings for the word "closet," which she takes from the _Oxford English Dictionary_, certain connotations of the _camera obscura_ also arise. Like the study/_camera obscura_ in Fig. 10 which overlaps the ideas of visualization and introspection with the material space where observation and thought take place, the closet can be a "place for private study or secluded speculations; _esp_. in reference to mere theories as opposed to practical measures." The term may also designate, as Locke's reference to "the mind's presence room" suggests, the "private apartment of a monarch or potentate." This "small space," (the most general definition of a closet) can also refer to bodily spaces such as the "privuy closet of the mayden's wombe" or to bodily functions such as those performed in the "water closet" (qtd. in Sedgwick 65).

There is, then, in the term "_camera_"--which overlaps the idea of the closet--a tradition of intersection also with the spaces of the body; and where the aperture of the eye refers to the observer and the objects of perception, the apertures of the body refer to the materiality and the "flesh" of being.

Thus, in Brontë's novels the thing-ness of existence

cannot be excluded from the structure of the observer <u>in camera</u>. The modes of naturalization invested in the image, and the accuracy of visual detail, are part and parcel of what Levine calls the "surface of things," which, in Brontë's work (as I will discuss in the next chapter), includes the surface of the female body. For Brontë, the processes of materialization and realization always gesture towards the external and objective. The eye of the materialistic/realistic beholder is embedded in a mode of vision that wishes to objectify, to realize within its scopic field the embodied object it wishes to own and control. The hegemony of such vision is associated with a material and materialistic "reality" that Brontë puts into play with a subversively non-material subjectivity that the realist eye can neither completely control nor encompass. It is in the multiplicity of enclosures (both bodily and architectural), the spaces <u>in camera</u> which Brontë's characters occupy and embody, that this interplay of the materially embodied reality and subjective ineffability is enacted.

Chapter II

The Theatre of the I/Eye: Brontë and the Gendered Protocols of Female Subjectivity

In the previous chapter, I attempted to establish that the camera obscura, far from being the dead metaphor and apparatus of rational/empiricist epistemology, remains, in the nineteenth century, a complex figure. It functions not only as a paradigm of vision and cognition through the overlapped epistemologies of rationalism, Romanticism and realism, but also as a figural space which refers to the boundaries of the body and to the body's placement in the spatial territory of a realism embedded in bourgeois materialism. In this chapter, I deal with the camera obscura, in relation to Brontë's work and practice, as a figure which, while it refers to the eye/mind of the camera, also becomes a space of representation organized and empowered (or disempowered) by the eye. As a locus of representation and self-representation, the camera obscura, in this part of my discussion, intersects those spaces (both figural and material) where the gendered politics of self-creation are negotiated and enacted.

While I refer to the camera obscura as a space of cognition and vision which overlaps the space of

site of female self-enactment where the female subject and the female artist must construct themselves while operating on the circumscribed stage assigned them by the power of the male eye/I. In the interactions of visual art, narrative and theatre, the space of the camera emerges as the site of a female subject that must construct and assert itself virtually within the repressive constraints of the masculine epistemological and aesthetic hegemony. With this complex construction of the camera obscura in mind, I wish to trace in Brontë's work and practice her sensitivity, not only to the inscription of the eye in the interrelated aesthetic modes of the period, but also to the space of the female I/eye which must negotiate this interactive territory of representation and subversively inscribe itself--without reinscribing its disempowerment--in the masculine scopic field.

I begin this chapter by outlining Brontë's knowledge of visual art and drama in order to position her as a writer who operated within a cultural field that was decidedly interdisciplinary. In establishing the intersections of Brontë's writing with nineteenth-century visual art and theatre my purpose is to refer Brontë's "intervisualizations" to the camera of the theatre which I take to be the paradigmatic space of the virtual or

represented self in Brontë's work. As Roland Barthes has said, "The camera obscura . . . has generated at one and the same time perspective painting, photography, and the diorama, which are all three arts of the stage" (31). Like Martin Meisel, who gives theatre a central position as "the evident meeting place of story and picture" (Realizations 3), I argue that, in Brontë's work, the idea of theatre becomes the epistemological and aesthetic matrix in which representation, especially self-representation, is embedded. It is this idea of theatre which informs Brontë's first-person narratives. These narrators are ambiguous selves whose stories I construe as strategic self-performances which resist ontological grounding in any integrated, unitary selfhood. Instead, these narrators, like Brontë (who was also given to "acting" her self), are located (or dislocated) in a play of self-representation which subverts the idea of the "authentic" self in favour of an enacted selfhood that negotiates the gendered parameters of self-empowerment.

While Miesel's work does not address theatre as a specifically gendered activity, I take theatre to be the defining mode of the female subject. It is at the level of enactment, as opposed to ontology, that the structures of the female self emerge in Brontë's novels. For this reason, I focus on the idea of theatrical realization as

the central concept which defines female self-imaging in Brontë's work. While I emphasize the importance of Brontë's experience with visual art to her understanding of iconic representation, I refer the visual image in her work to the paradigms of theatrical self-representation. I focus, in particular, on the "catoptric" or reflective image which gestures back to the observer/subject. Drawing on Herbert Blau's theories of the audience, I construct the image as strategically catoptric in that the politics of self-reflection structure the female subject as a collusive enactment which reflects the desires of a male audience.

In order to resist the self-denying reflectivity of collusive female self-representations, Brontë develops an ontologically enigmatic female subject whose subversive performances refuse to align themselves with the desires of the male observer. Thus the spaces in Brontë's novels, the rooms, closets, and enclosures that mark the confining parameters of female being, become doubled sites where the ontological ambiguities of a subversive female theatrics invade the precincts reserved for collusive self-enactments appropriated to the uses of the male I/eye. In place of a passive reflectivity which gestures back to the empowered position of the masculine subject, the enigmatic theatrics of the subversively specular and spectral female

self gesture back toward the ontological abyss out of which all representations arise. In this disjunctive theatrics, the seeming integrity of the female persona is denaturalized as a realization engendered in the strategic "stagecraft" of masculine self-empowerment.

Where the camera is in Brontë's novels is also the space of theatre, the site of a mind/eye that invests itself in the aporic play of self-representation. Working against the stabilities of the Lockean camera obscura which defines its space as the space of the magisterial viewer, the theatrical camera of subversive female selfhood retranscribes the space of the sovereign viewer as a site of specular and spectral play where the shadow of a prophetic female subject may appear. Radically unaligned with the naturalized ontology of female enactments performed for the masculine optics of the Lockean "audience chamber," this spectral female subjectivity emerges on the margins of those spaces that are designed to accommodate only the magisterial male subject. The ironizing presences of the female characters in Brontë's juvenilia, the metamorphic appearances of Frances Henri on the margins on Crimsworth's narrative in The Professor, Jane's strategic emergences from the marginalized space of the window-seat and, finally, the determined spectrality of Lucy Snowe in the constrained

spaces of Villette, are all developments of a strategically theatrical female presence which haunts the precincts of the Lockean observer in the camera of male authority.

1) Theatre, Visual Art and Narrative: Brontë's Intersections

As Martin Meisel has stated in his comprehensive study, Realizations: Narrative, Pictorial and Theatrical Arts in the Nineteenth Century, "in the nineteenth century, fiction painting and drama occupied certain planes of resemblance" (435). Novels, pictures and enactment make up the "dialectical field" (3) to which Meisel's study is addressed:

> To common sense, the novel is the most thoroughly narrative and serially progressive of forms; painting is the most pictorial and static; and plays, with a story unfolding through a visible enactment appear to combine something of both. And indeed, the play in the nineteenth-century is the evident meeting place of story and picture . . . . Common sense, however, as often happens, is not allowed the last word. In the nineteenth century all three forms are narrative and pictorial; pictures are given to storytelling and novels unfold through and with pictures. Each form and each work becomes the site of a complex interplay of narrative and picture, rather than one member in a three-legged race to synthesis. (3)

The intersections of theatre, pictorial art and narrative, as Meisel observes, mark, not three separate spheres of

representation, but a polylogue of representational modes. Moreover, these modes constitute an interactive field where vision is continually implicated through pictorial strategies embedded in narrative and drama.

For Brontë, whose writing was informed by a strong interest in visual art and drama, the negotiation of such an interdynamic aesthetic field would have been congenial. As Christine Alexander says in reference to Brontë's juvenile writings, "we see on almost every page . . . what might be called the intertextuality of Brontë's early writing" ("Art and Artists" 178). Brontë's "particular emphasis on cultural topics--especially on painting and sculpture--as a means of refining her mind . . . appears to have been of special value to her" ("Art and Artists" 179):

> Charlotte knew about artists as varied as Raphael, Titian, Van Dyck, Rembrandt, Le Brun, Vernet, Claude, Salvator Rosa, Turner, Martin and Etty. Architects, like Palladio, and sculptors like Chantrey are mentioned not simply in passing but as practitioners of a particular style which in turn imparts its particular ethical values to a scene. At thirteen Charlotte writes of "Corinthian pillars," "splendid engravings . . . in mezzotint style," "the grand collection of painting and statues which adorn the Louvre gallery"; she discusses the nature of the "sublime art of painting" and the symmetry and proportion of particular styles of architecture. In later manuscripts, characters browse through portfolios of paintings . . . a copy of the Apollo Belvedere plays a significant role in the relationship between two characters, a sketch-book with engravings by Finden offers an excuse for detailed character studies, and the constant

> references to "noble prospects," to ruins, groves and the sublime and the beautiful in landscape betray Charlotte Brontë's thorough initiation into the picturesque taste of the period. ("Art and Artists" 180)

Early in her career, before she committed herself to novel writing, Brontë wished to become an artist and attempted to educate herself as thoroughly as possible in all aspects of visual art. According to Mary Taylor, who was a fellow student at Roe Head School, Brontë was remarkable for her skill in interpreting any specimen of visual art that came her way:

> She used to draw much better, and more quickly, than anything we had seen before, and knew much about celebrated pictures and painters. Whenever an opportunity offered of examining a picture or cut of any kind, she went over it piecemeal, with her eyes close to the paper, looking so long that we used to ask her "what she saw in it." She could always see plenty and explained it very well. (SHLL 1:90)

In the Keighley Library, Brontë would have found biographies of artists as well as works that pertained to art history and art criticism. Blackwood's, Fraser's Magazine, The Quarterly Review, The Edinburgh Review, and The Spectator, all contained discussions of past and current issues in art.

As well, Brontë had access to a number of sources that provided her with a visual record of works by various artists. Patrick Brontë, as already noted, acquired four prints by John Martin which the Brontë children admired

and copied. But the "new Annuals flooding the market from 1823" also "boasted numerous, high quality illustrations by leading artists of the day." These annuals "brought the world of London society to the Parsonage doorstep and made fashionable portrait painters and engravers like Westall and Finden, household names" ("Art and Artists" 185).

The Brontë library also contained Bewick's History of British Birds, which was later to appear in Jane Eyre. Brontë admired Bewick and made several copies of his woodcuts. In her poem, "Lines on the Celebrated Bewick," Brontë expresses the reverence she felt for his "pictured thoughts that breathe and speak and burn" (Poems 100).

As a child, Brontë was taken by her father to visit an artist's studio in Keighley (SHLL 1:50). She also visited her brother, who had a studio in Bradford and was friendly with other artists in the District. According to Gérin, the "artistic, literary and musical circles" which Branwell found at Bradford, "threw him into the society of all that was keenest and best among the young intelligentsia of the place" (Branwell Brontë 143). These included William Robinson, a prominent Leeds portrait painter who taught the young Brontës to draw and paint and later became Branwell's teacher when it was decided that Branwell would be an artist. During Branwell's regular

weekend visits to Haworth (see Branwell Brontë 142), he would have had opportunities to discuss the latest aesthetic issues with his sisters, particularly with Charlotte, who took such a keen interest in visual art.

Although it was Branwell who was groomed to become the professional artist, Charlotte's ambition to become an artist was hardly less keen. Francis Leyland reports that "Charlotte even thought of art as a profession for herself; and so strong was this intentions that she could scarcely be convinced it was not her true vocation" (qtd. in Gérin Charlotte Brontë 82). Barred from the serious pursuit of a career in art, Brontë might have hoped that she could support herself by producing drawings and engravings at home, like the heroine of Anne Brontë's The Tenant of Wildfell Hall, who maintains herself and her family by painting "landscapes, figure and sentimental pictures of children" (Jane Sellars 70). According to Jane Sellars, who correctly remarks that the Brontë sisters' art never developed beyond an amateur level, it was Charlotte who, "with her fierce determination to acquire knowledge of art, both through her own practice of it and her observation, ha[d] the most highly developed critical judgement" (75).

Even after she gave up her ambition to become an artist, Brontë still took a great interest in visual art

and continued to develop her connoisseurship. When she was asked to illustrate a reprint of Jane Eyre (whose heroine is, appropriately, an amateur artist), Brontë declined, saying that she did not have the requisite skill. In order to become an artist one must have both "an artist's eye" and "an artist's hand"; and, as she admitted to her publishers, she "lacked the artist's hand" (SHLL 2:197). However, her statement also implies that she felt she *did* possess an artist's eye, even though she could not produce professional-level drawings. In fact, the very criticism Brontë levels at her own work conveys the maturity of her aesthetic judgment.

Whenever she could, Brontë also visited galleries and attended exhibitions. Sellars suggests that it was likely that she visited, with her family, the Annual Exhibition at Leeds in 1834; and the Brontës' "avid reading of the review columns of the provincial papers" would also have given them information about other local art exhibitions (Sellars 61). Brontë was also fortunate to see the Brussels Salon, which was held in 1842, an event that would later be described in Villette. After the success of Jane Eyre, she travelled to London on a number of occasions and visited Somerset House, where she found only "half a dozen good and interesting pictures (SHLL 3:241), the Royal Academy (SHLL 3:115-16), the National Gallery

(SHLL 2:230-31, 254) and The Great Exhibition (SHLL 3:239).

Her friend Mary Taylor said of her: "Of course artists and authors stood high with Charlotte, and the best thing after their works would have been their company" (SHLL 1:276). As Alexander's eloquent summation suggests, art and the visual artist were always embedded in her work, shaping its form and its influence on her readers:

> The artist was not only the most fully conscious of human beings, but also the only one capable of awakening his fellow to consciousness of new beauty and truth. Charlotte Brontë showed her early perception of this truth by allowing art, particularly the art of the painter, to alter and structure the way she perceived the world, and thereby alter the way her readers saw the world. ("Art and Artists" 202)

As true as Alexander's statement is, there is another context which modulates Brontë's perception of visual art and its inscription in her works, and that context is theatre. As Carol Bock points out, it is important to remember that drama also had a profound impact on Brontë. Brontë referred to the early literary productions of the Brontë children as "our plays," a phrase which Bock rightly interprets as an indication of the dramatic character of these early narrative productions:

> In calling the early Brontë narratives collaborative performances and games, I am not speaking metaphorically but am attempting to describe literally the creative activity that engaged the children during their first years as

> writers. Each child wrote, not in solipsistic isolation as we have often been led to believe, but with a keen sense of audience and the performative aspects of storytelling. (1)

Thus Brontë's early stories reflect a sense of narrative as an enactment shared by both narrator and audience/reader. Further, by "dramatizing her ideas about storytelling through the narrating behaviour of fictional characters," Brontë learned to create a kind of self-reflective representation that refers as much to the strategic virtualities of the storyteller as to the representation itself. Her narrators, such as Charles Wellesley, the quintessential voyeur and poseur, take up certain narratorial postures which are patently the enactments of a persona. In doing so, these self-consciously performative narrators create perspectives which frame, not only the fictive world they create, but also the parameters of their own self-enactments. As Bock says, the narrators of Brontë's tales "not only create fictions but are, in turn, themselves created by the fiction-making activities in which they participate" (5).

This self-reflective theatrics owes something, as Bock claims, to the influence of Blackwood's Magazine and to the Noctes Ambrosiana in particular. The setting of this series in Blackwood's is "Ambrose's Tavern," where the Noctes conversations take place:

> The speakers discuss a wide range of subjects, from agronomy to philosophy, but are

> particularly interested in literary gossip. . . In addition to being both highly literate and literary, the Noctes interlocutors are also, like the child-producers of "our plays," self-consciously engaged in performing for one another. (Bock 13)

Used as models for the "Conversations" in the children's own miniature versions of Blackwood's, these dramatized conversations would have encouraged Brontë to realize that the "point was not to find one's authentic voice," but to understand storytelling as something "dramatically conceived within a fictitious setting . . . " (Bock 14).

Two other sources which also affected the theatrical shape of Brontë's early (and later) narratives, were Byron and Scott. Both of these authors tended to play with persona in their works and "felt under no obligation to speak to their readers in consistently authentic or confessional voices" (Bock 18). An "infamous poseur" himself, Byron's "failure to establish a clear sense of self-identity in actual life was correlative to his remarkable ability to adopt a multiplicity of narrative voices . . . ." Scott felt a "similar need to avoid speaking to readers in his own person" and developed dramatic personae such as Jedediah Chleishbotham and Peter Patties to distance himself from the "selves" in his fictional writing (Bock 16-18). Both writers "reinforced" in Brontë "what she had already learned from reading Blackwood's Magazine: that writing was an act of

pretence" (Bock 18).

Thus, while there has been a tendency to think of her first person narrations--especially Jane Eyre--as "confessional" narratives,[1] the theatrical tradition which influenced the juvenile writings suggests that Brontë herself would not have endorsed such a response. Certainly Brontë's juvenilia attests to the strong influence of drama and performance. "The Poetaster: A Drama in Two Volumes" (EEW 1:179-96) is written in play form, as is "The Rivals" (1:304-8). "Scenes from the Great Bridge" (1:78-80) as well as "An American Tale" (1:83-5) also contain dialogues written in dramatic form, as if they were meant to be spoken or acted. Arthur, the Marquis of Douro (later named Zamorna) patronizes the playwright, Edwin Hamilton, whose tragedy is performed at the "Theatre Royal" (2.1:237-38), a reference to the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane (see Alexander's note EEW 2.1:237); and "A Frenchman's Journal" (1:250-54) provides a lengthy and detailed account of a melodrama which includes descriptions of the audience and the theatrical setting.

The multiple authors of the juvenilia also suggest that Brontë was interested in playing with the personae of narration rather than attempting to establish an "authentic" voice. Charles Wellesely, the predominant narrator, is, in fact, entirely untrustworthy and given to

lying. When he wishes to dispose of a literary rival, Captain Tree, Wellesley simply kills him off in one of his stories ("Something About Arthur" 2.1:33), leaving Tree to resurrect himself in a later publication where he indignantly announces that he is still alive (2.1:44). Such fabulation echoes the processes of theatre where selfhood can be enacted in an endless series of extinctions and regenerations. The Professor, which is structured around the postures and professions of its narrator, also belies the assumption that the "I" of Brontëan narration inheres in the author herself. Certainly the evasions and narrative ruptures of Villette (a novel which assumes the ubiquity of self-performance) signal the fact that many of Lucy Snowe's ostensible "confessions" need to be seen as self-protective postures.[2]

Brontë's own self-performances demonstrate an affinity with the personae assumed by Byron and Scott, both writers she admired.[3] Her pseudonym, Currer Bell, constitutes a similar masking which allowed her to retain, for a time, the protective anonymity of a false name while assuming the borrowed authority of a male persona. But Brontë's self-enactments appear on other levels of self-presentation as well. As Tromly notes, Brontë's letters reveal a constant attention to audience and to the

authorial masks appropriate to the audiences her letters address:

> The letters, in fact, can be said to present at least as many different Charlotte Brontës as there were correspondents. As we recognize a nervously playful Charlotte with George Smith, a literary Charlotte with W.S. Williams, a domestic Charlotte with Ellen (etc.), we would do well to be cautious in the conclusions we draw about this very complicated being. (12)

In the letters, too, Currer Bell becomes something more than a pseudonym:

> It is interesting to note . . . how frequently Bell becomes a separate personage--almost an alter ego--in the letters. When Brontë assured Williams, after having been insulted by a critic, that what Charlotte Brontë "feels or has felt is not the question--it is Currer Bell who was insulted." (Tromly 12-13)

Thus, for Brontë, the structure of the narrated and narrating self becomes a complex dramatization in which the ontology of the "I" is never absolutely fixed but is always referred to the level of performance and self-representation.

Even on a non-narrative level, Brontë would have been acquainted with the performative perspectives and techniques of theatre. Certainly, the charade scene in Jane Eyre argues a familiarity with the private theatricals popular in nineteenth-century bourgeois households, as does the performance of the school play at Madame Beck's pensionnat in Villette.[4] Ellen Nussey's description of a coronation ceremony at Roe Head School

organized by Brontë suggests that Brontë, although she was generally a very serious student, enjoyed arranging such performances:

> When her companions formed the idea of having a coronation performance on a half holiday, it was Charlotte Brontë who drew up the programme, arranged the titles to be adopted by her companions for the occasion, wrote the invitations to those who were to grace the ceremony, and selected for each a title, either for sound that pleased the ear or for historical association. (SHLL 1:95).

As well as organizing these details of the performance, Brontë also wrote an "exquisite little speech" to be recited by the student chosen to play the role of Queen:

> Powerful Queen! accept this Crown, the symbol of dominion, from the hands of your faithful and affectionate subjects! And if their earnest and united wishes have any efficacy, you will long be permitted to reign over this peaceful, though circumscribed empire. (SHLL 1:95)

While Brontë's practical experience of theatre did not extend beyond the domestic confines of home and the "circumscribed empire" of boarding school, the professional theatre was also accessible to her. Blackwood's and Fraser's Magazine both carried articles concerning the theatre which might well have interested Brontë.[5] Sources such as these would have provided her with enough background in the aesthetics of theatre to make her more than a naïve observer of things theatrical. She certainly felt self-confident enough to express her own opinions concerning contemporary drama among the

London cognoscenti whom she met on a visit to London in 1849. During this visit, Brontë was taken twice to see the actor, Macready, in Macbeth and Othello, and was not hesitant to declare her dislike of his performances which she found far too mannered. In a letter to a former teacher, Miss Wooler, she reports:

> I astounded a dinner-party by saying I did not like him. . . . It is the fashion to rave about his splendid acting--anything more false and artificial--less genuinely impressive than his whole style I could scarcely have imagined. (SHLL 3:76 qtd. in Barker 618)

Although she was interested in theatre and drama, the London theatre scene did not impress her. She "added to the general consternation by attacking the stage system itself: actors could manage farce well enough but they knew nothing about tragedy or Shakespeare and the theatre was therefore a failure" (Barker 618).

Her reaction, however, was very different when it came to her experience of the actress Rachel during another visit to London in 1851. This time, she attended the French Theatre to see "the most famous French actress of the day" (Barker 677). Concerning the first performance, Adrienne Lecouvreur, Brontë wrote to Amelia Taylor: "I have seen Rachel--her acting was something apart from any other acting it has come in my way to witness--her soul was in it--and a strange soul she has . . . " (SHLL 1:245). Of the second occasion, when

Rachel appeared as Camilla in Horace, Brontë wrote to Sydney Dobell:

> I saw her in Lecouvrier and Camilla [sic]--in the last character I shall never forget her--she will come to me in sleepless nights again and yet again. Fiends can hate, scorn, rave, wreathe [sic] and agonize as she does, not mere men and women. I neither love, esteem nor admire this strange being, but, (if I could bear the mental stimulus so long), I would go every night for three months to watch and study its manifestations. (SHLL 3:253)

However conflicted the feelings it aroused, the apocalyptic vision of Rachel was to remain with Brontë as a profound experience that would surface again in Lucy Snowe's vision of Vashti in Villette.

Thus, although Brontë committed herself to writing as her primary representational mode, the aesthetics of visual art and theatre also played a crucial part in the shaping of her narratives. For Brontë, who consistently imported the structures of visual and dramatic art into her works, writing was an interdisciplinary process which required an understanding, not only of narrative technique, but also of the conventions of theatre and visual art. The result is an intersectionary narrative mode which is informed by the paradigms of vision inherent in both painting and drama. In Brontë's work, the eye, and the subject constructed by that eye, can be located in those spaces where the structures of art and theatre lend themselves to the shaping of the represented self.

2) The Audience in the Image and the Gendered Art of Realization

Of the three modes, narrative, visual art and theatre, theatre has been cast most often as an illicit sphere of aesthetic practice. In the Victorian period, in particular, the idea of theatre was fraught with aesthetic and epistemological dilemmas. As Nina Auerbach observes:

> Reverent Victorians shunned theatricality as the ultimate, deceitful mobility. It connotes not only lies, but a fluidity of character that decomposes the uniform integrity of the self. The idea that character might be inherently unstable--that Newman's "phantom . . . which gibbers instead of me" might also be the real man--is so unnerving that Victorian literature conveys a covert fear that any activity is destructive of character because all activity smacks of acting. (4)

Thus the idea of theatre in the nineteenth century encompassed some highly threatening concepts. By virtue (or vice) of its performative nature, theatre represented the greatest threat to the authenticating strategies of the self. To accept the "gibbering phantom" as a component of the self is to accept the fact that subjectivity is a plurality rather than a single, ontologically secure entity. This phantomic extension of the self, moreover, is not confined to the frame of the theatre (where its illegitimacy might be defined and contained) but is endemic to being itself. That is, if we

are capable of making and seeing ghosts of ourselves on the stage, we must also be capable of enacting ourselves and seeing ourselves enacted in all our activities. And once we admit this de-ontologizing premise, there is really no stopping the contagion of theatricalization which suggests to us that "it is scarcely possible to be ourselves without acting ourselves . . . . (Auerbach 8).

In terms of the epistemology of the camera obscura, such theatrical deregulation and disintegration of the subject represents a profound challenge to the Lockean idea of a stable, Godlike observer in a visually rationalized relationship with the externalized field of the object. As Crary has noted, it is only by dint of the regulatory rationalization represented by the camera obscura that the subjective (and therefore potentially unstable) "ground" of perception and cognition can be repressed in favour of a stable binary relationship between subject and object, self and other, internal and external. Once the self-oriented perceptual and cognitive activity of the subject is admitted, such stable differentiations break down. In place of a subject defined by a neutral eye directed at and transmitting information from the object world, we are confronted with an eye/I which sees itself in the images it creates. The subjective eye/I, in contrast to the eye and subject of

the classical camera obscura, admits what Herbert Blau calls the "vice of representation" (328). In the Lockean camera, the eye transmits, without subjective interference, the "ideas" or images of the objective world which are then impressed on the mind. In the eye/mind of the theatrical self, however, the image does not pretend to be the direct object of perception (as Locke's figuration would like to have it) but sees in the image a reflection of the subject. The space of the mind, invaded by the idea of theatre, becomes a camera where the image is always informed by the phantom of the self.

Blau, in his discussion of the idea of the audience, also links the space and activities of the theatre with the subject-oriented functions of the mind and the eye. In fact, Blau considers the act of self-imaging as an originary drama which informs the epistemological premises of the theatre. Referring to Jacques Lacan, whose discussion of the mirror stage constructs the development of consciousness as an act of self-reflection, Blau speaks of the "miniature drama of the mirror stage," when the self first perceives the "primordial discord of a fragmented body image" (65). Here the subject, "split by the lure of spatial identification" with the mirror image, adopts a "geometry of the psyche," in which the initial containment of the

integrated self is differentiated and projected into the mirror space of the self/other. Hence the inescapable ambivalence of conscious selfhood which "infects" life with representation: those images which reflect the subject's insatiable desire to complete itself.

> All of this came from an initial act of spectatorship, the assumption of a specular image, in which the subject was precipitated as an irreducible fiction, forever divided against itself, yet still "pregnant with the correspondences that unite the I with the statue in which man projects himself, with the phantoms that dominate him, or with the automaton in which, in ambiguous relation, the world of his own making tends to find completion." (Jacques Lacan qtd. in Blau 66)

Thus, iconic construction (the "statues, phantoms and automata") in which the subject sees itself and its desire for self-completion, becomes the reflective and representational site of a self-conscious eye/I forever divided into ambiguity.

In the figuration of the camera obscura, the ambivalence of the plural self is inscribed when Locke's blank slate, which seems to register primary data attributable to the self-stabilizing object, is overlaid by the specular and spectral data of representation. Coleridge, whose sublime camera obscura is informed by the solipsistic optics of the creative self, locates the self in the self-representational activity of "catoptric" vision. Jenijoy Labelle provides a particularly deft

description of this Coleridgean I/eye:

> In his Biographia Literaria [Coleridge] writes of a subject which becomes a subject by the act of constructing itself objectively to itself. This act of reflection is a kind of mirroring (metaphorically speaking) in which the self projects itself in an otherness so the self as subject can observe itself--and by that very act constitute itself as a subject. (273)

Here, in the space of cognition, the eye's imaging is construed, not as an unmediated image of the other, but as an image of the subject-as-other or the other-as-subject.

This self-identifying iconicity is also a feature of theatre where the phantom on the stage is the other/self of the audience. In the *camera* of Coleridgean consciousness and the *camera* of theatre, the image of the self-as-other constitutes a complex subject whose ambiguity is inscribed in the reflective image that enacts the self. At the dividing frame of representation, whether image or enactment, the eye/I simultaneously divides and projects itself onto an ambivalent other/self whose irreducible plurality constitutes the aporic "ground" of self-construction. In theatre as in consciousness, the image reflects the scopic drive for an impossible unity which the paradoxical site of representation (with its other/self that is yet is not the subject) always defers. It is the subjective affinity with representation, with the always- deferred completion with the other/self of the image, that the Lockean *camera*

wishes to suppress and theatre subversively validates. In the catoptric "drama" of the Lacanian (and Coleridgean) mind/eye, there is no object or alterity that is not the phantom of an observing subject, a subject who desires completion through self-recognition in the paradoxical otherness of the image. Like theatre, consciousness requires an audience in order to represent itself to itself. Like theatre, the mind/eye is simultaneously actor and spectator, because consciousness is itself a drama where the "spectatorial presence of the split subject" is inscribed (Blau 43).

For Brontë, especially the Brontë of the first-person narratives, the space of representation is necessarily a dramatized space manifesting the "spectatorial presence of the split subject." It is only through constant self-reflection that Brontë's narrators can bring themselves to light on the stage of their self-narrations. They must, perforce, become self-observers, and it is only through the phantomic "presence" of the other/self in images, reflections and enactments, that the eye/I of the narrating subject can emerge. In the aporic play of self-enactment, the narrated and narrating subjects of Brontë's fiction (themselves fictions) appear in varying postures and images of selfhood which do not inhere in any stabilizing ontology but are embedded instead in the

catoptric theatre of the self. The visually perceived, in Brontë's fictions, is always informed by the idea of the performed self, the specular "embodiment" through which the drama of self-enactment is achieved.

In Jane Eyre, where the spectral and specular predominate, the encounter with the other/self becomes a crucial strategy in Jane's articulation of her selfhood. The ghostly apparition she sees in the mirror in the red room, and the image of the spectral Bertha which she encounters in the mirror of her bedroom at Thornfield, both register the self-defining presence of the other/self. In the red room, for instance, the representation in the mirror, which Jane perceives as a haunting and haunted otherness, becomes a reflective site of her own alienation at Gateshead, where, as an unwanted and shunned inhabitant, she is allowed only a spectral and marginal presence. What the reflected image enacts is the estranged and estranging "object" that is Jane's own alienated selfhood. Similarly, the bridal image of Bertha, also seemingly spectral, is a phantom appearance that reflects the unwitting ambiguity of Jane's own "bridal" self. Here the reflection of Bertha, the terrible and terrifying phantom who is the "real" wife, enacts both the spectrality to which Bertha has been consigned by Rochester, and the spectrality of Jane's own

status as Rochester's "false" bride. Bertha's reflection thus becomes the other/self whose image reflects her audience, Jane. In Jane Eyre's specular dramas, what one sees in the object is the image of the beholder, the subject whose ambivalent selfhood is enacted in reflection.

The specular performance of the self, while it is most obviously imaged in the mirror, is also present in other forms of visual representation. The gallery scene in Villette, for instance, involves a complex interaction of subject positions in relation to the paintings whose audience treats them as sites of self-completion. It is significant that the space of the gallery, where the paintings are staged, is itself the scene of a social drama. Mark Phillips, in his study of perspective in Villette, articulates how the multiply embedded drama is shaped by interactions among viewers, painting and the space of the gallery itself:

> The gallery episode is itself a scene, both because it appears to Lucy as though it were a spectacle (she is even sitting through most of it as if at a theatre) and because it is among the novel's big dramatic scenes. Further, in the gallery as in the concert hall and theatre, the spectators themselves offer a spectacle which alternates with that of the framed view, or, in the case of the gallery, views. . . . [T]he gallery itself is effectively framed by being, like the theatre and concert hall, an enclosed, clearly defined space; finally, the pictures are embedded within this space as scenes within a scene, spectacle within a spectacle. (122)

In this multiple theatricalization of image, space, and observer, the paintings become sites divided from but also contained by the dramatic space of the gallery, where the viewers who (self-consciously aware of their own performance as aesthetic observers) do not merely look but take up postures of observation. Acting simultaneously as audience and spectacle, the gallery-goers treat the paintings as sites of subjective projection, as essentially specular representations which reflect and affirm their own viewing postures. Thus de Hamal sees the voluptuous Cleopatra as part of his enactment of the complete aesthete. The image of the erotic female object (acceptably aestheticized) is perceived as a completion of his own performance as an observer whose licentious regard is legitimated by his seeming aesthetic sensibility. Similarly, M. Paul, who proposes the dreary La vie d'une femme to Lucy as the proper representation of womanhood, implicates his own self-construction as virtuous male who prefers female self-abnegation to the eroticism of the Cleopatra. In the context of this self-reflective self-completion which the image constitutes for both de Hamal and M. Paul, Lucy's rejection of the same images is significant. When she shuns both representations in favour of some "exquisite little pictures of still life" (251), Lucy is also shunning reflective identification

with the Cleopatra and La vie d'une femme. Refusing to see either image as the other/self into which she might project her own desire for completion, she becomes a "heretic" observer[6] who self-consciously refuses to enact the viewing posture that would implicate her in these derogatory representations.

For Brontë, then, representation does not function as a visual strategy designed to authenticate the exterior object. Rather, the image is constructed as a problematic site which gestures, through its represented objectivity, to its audience, the "spectatorial presence of the split subject." As I have attempted to demonstrate in these examples, the frame of the mirror and the painting corresponds to the frame of the stage in that all of these sites of imaging are also sites of a complex dramatization in which the eye/I looks to see its own self-performance. The specular enactments that take place at the site of the image are thus scenes of an ontology which refers, not to the absolute differentiation of self and other, but to the aporic differentiations of the split subject. Where the stabilizing eye of the Lockean camera wishes to refer sight to an object of perception, the theatrically determined I/eye (which sees in the object a representation or enactment of the other/self) sends sight along a specular trajectory which gestures back to the

subject who is the audience in the image. In this context, the external object gives way to a self-informed objectivity that is loosened from the rationalized coordinates of self and other. In place of the stability of a subject over against the "reality" of an external other, there is the ontological uncertainty of a subject who negotiates reality within the play of subjective response.

When the audience is in the image, representation of the real becomes more overtly virtual, more conscious of the subjective desires and strategies of the eye/I in its desire for completion. The painting, the presence of the actor on stage, and the image projected on the screen of the _camera obscura_/mind all function in an audience space (or "presence room") where reality becomes a relative notion embedded in the perceptual/cognitive movements of the observer. As Katherine Hayles notes in her explication of the subjective relativity of external phenomena,

> Like the figure in a painting who wishes to gesture toward the picture that contains him, we can never arrive at a complete and unambiguous description of the reality because we are involved with what we would describe. (Hayles qtd. in Greenberg 59)

While we "gesture toward" the frame of the real, we cannot really know its shape. What we wish to describe as reality can only be an ambiguous description which is

embedded in the frame and response of the observer. The ambiguous description or representation is as close as we can get to the "real thing," which is inaccessible. Thus, like the gesturing figure in the painting, we turn on the fulcrum of the eye/I which registers, not so much the real itself, but the effect of the real as it appears to the observer.

What is in play here is not the primary reality of the external other, but the surface or affect of an image which refers itself to the observing subject. As Meisel notes in his chapter on "The Art of Effect," this concern with representation as a means of reflecting and invoking subjective response is endemic to all the arts in the Victorian era. Meisel observes that it is the "art of effect"--the deliberate referral, through the aesthetic object, to the subjective response of the observer--which determines the power of the image in the nineteenth century. As a reviewer of Daniel Maclise's painting _The Play Scene in Hamlet_ declares: "The boards of the theatre and the canvass are the same thing--the eye is to behold and the mind is to be moved" (qtd. in Meisel 69). The concept of "effect," according to Meisel, is

> a category that cuts across the verbal and visual arts and informs the collaboration of narrative and picture. The art of effect, for good or ill, was Romantic art, finding sanction in the rebellion against the priority of harmonious proportion, extrinsic form, and a rational correspondence between subjective

response and external cause. (70)

No longer referring to the object or to the rationally delineated externality of the Lockean observer, the art of effect, like Coleridge's catoptric subject, accommodates an observer who registers the image, not as an external object, but as specular representation whose efficacy is determined by its alignment with subjective response. In an era that had "got the habit of feeling through the eyes" (Hussey qtd. in Meisel 84), the subject-oriented sight that the Lockean observer wishes to deny is subversively acknowledged in the aesthetic image which directs itself simultaneously to affect and effect.

In this interdynamic in which perception of the "real" is as much a matter of subjective projection as objective observation, reality becomes a relative concept negotiated within the framework of the subject's relationship to sight. Accordingly, what counts is not the real, but <u>realization</u>: the more or less persuasive enactment of what constitutes reality for the observer. As the quotation from Hussey's review implies, the affect/effect of realization is couched in terms drawn from theatre. Like the space of the theatre, the space of painting is seen as a site of interprojective enactment where what is on the stage both reflects and engages the audience. As Hussey says in the same review, "It is the

business of the dramatist to make good pictures, and whether it be done by the players or the painter, what matter, so they be effective . . . " (Hussey qtd. in Meisel 69). Realization in painting and theatre thus invests in the idea that the "real" resides in the persuasiveness that can be achieved through its enactment in the field of the virtual. As Meisel points out, the virtual pleasures of nineteenth-century theatre were not just a matter of creating for the eye/I a representation of the real, but also of inscribing reality in the effects of realization. In the tableau vivant, a popular form in the nineteenth century which has affinities with the charade, real figures mimic the represented figures in a painting, thereby creating an extra level of illusionism that delights with its ability to articulate reality as a negotiation within the frame of representation. For instance, the painter, David Wilkie, describes a tableau vivant he witnessed in Dresden where it was presented as an "entr'acte performance."

> I have been much interested by an exhibition at one of their little Theatres of what they call a Tableau. The curtain is drawn up between the acts, the stage darkened, and at the back is a scene resembling a picture frame, in the interior of which most brilliantly lighted from behind, men and women are arranged in appropriate dresses, to make up the composition of some known picture. One I saw the other night was an interior after D. Teniers. It was the most beautiful reality I ever saw. . . . We were quite delighted with it; but so evanescent is the group,that the curtain drops in twenty

> seconds, the people being unable to remain for any longer period in one precise position. (qtd. in Meisel 48)[7]

Here, rather than the real, is the _frisson_ of realization. Between icon and theatre, the "living" tableau constitutes a virtual transformation from one level of representation to another in whose illusionistic shifts resides a "beautiful" reality.

What we see in the realized tableau is not only a virtuality which carries the effect of the real, but also the degree to which we can be seduced by the illusionism of such theatrics. This possibility of an illusory reality has always haunted the cognitive/visual space of the _camera obscura_ where the "sureties" of an eye that can clearly see its object could be so readily undermined by the illusory presence of a spectral "reality." While the empiricist/rationalist _camera_ professed to be the figure of an eye/mind with unmediated access to a visually apprehended exterior, it also represented the space of Della Porta's illusionistic "sorcery" where eye and mind could be confounded by the seeming "reality" of spectral appearances. The magic lantern--the optical box whose projected virtualities intersected the epistemological guarantees of the classical _camera obscura_--also suggested that the real might be displaced by the _frisson_ of realization. Invaded by the theatrical eye/I, the

perceptual/epistemological authority of the Lockean observer is challenged by the virtual "real" whose effects imply that the stability of the classical space of perception and cognition might be a site of a cognitive/visual play.

The illusionistic camera, like theatre, suggests that seeming and seen can be elided, that the image of the real does not refer to the external real but to an eye/I whose "reality" is only the effect of realization--of the stagecraft inherent in representation. The space of theatrical realization is thus a site of ontological displacement and ambiguity where the "real" object is seen in the play of representation. In place of the ontology of a subject situated in a rationalized relationship to an external real, we have a subject invested in the representational metamorphoses of realization.

The destabilizing effects of the illusory presence within the camera of the observer/audience is something Brontë employs to undo the coordinates of the real and to direct attention to the processes of realization. One of the most striking examples of such undoing is the shifting portrait which Lucy Snowe sees during her visit to Madame Walravens's house in Villette.[8] At first, left to wait in a chamber, Lucy barely catches sight of the portrait before it vanishes to reveal a labyrinthine space beyond:

> . . . through the deep gloom few details of

> furniture were apparent. These few I amused myself by puzzling to make out; and in particular, I was attracted by the outline of a picture on a wall.
>
> Bye-and-bye the picture seemed to give way: to my bewilderment, it shook, it sunk, it rolled back into nothing: its vanishing left an opening arched, with a mystic winding stair. (487)

From this space emerges Madame Walravens herself, a "real" person who appears like a figure in a tableau of some fairy-tale scene. When Madame Walravens disappears and the portrait is replaced, Lucy has time to look again at the vanishing picture:

> Besides a cross of curiously carved old ivory, yellow with time, and sloped above a dark-red _prie-dieu_, furnished duly with a rich missal and ebon rosary--hung the picture whose dim outline had drawn my eye before--the picture which moved, fell away with the wall and let in phantoms. Imperfectly seen, I had taken it for a Madonna; revealed by clearer light, it proved to be a woman's portrait in a nun's dress. (490)

The portrait, of course, is a picture of Justine Marie, Paul Emmanuel's dead first love; but what is significant here is the dynamic layering of realizations.

What Lucy perceives in the portrait which disappears with the moving wall of a door and "lets in phantoms" is a series of realizations reminiscent of Wilkie's tableau. Almost less "real" than the portrait on the wall which at least returns to a stable position, Madame Walraven's brief emergence from the "phantom space" behind the picture is much like the "evanescent" appearance of the tableau figures who appear and disappear behind the

curtains of the stage. Like an observer caught in the illusionistic effects of theatre, Lucy's vision is confounded by perceptual shifts which efface the differentiating lines between reality and representation. Although she later sees the portrait in a "clearer light," the Lockean coordinates of the camera she inhabits in Madame Walravens's house are rendered groundless. Here Brontë affirms, through the shifting "effects" of images that are simultaneously the dramatic and the aporic "ground" of realization. The potent virtuality of these dramatic representations epitomizes the degree to which the phantom of representation can infect the seen with effective seeming. This illicit enactment is what threatens the ontology of the self and the authenticity of the see-er in relation to the seen. In place of the single, godlike observer contained by the regulatory premises of the Lockean camera, we have an abyssal, continually differentiated subject embedded in the catoptric sight (and site) of another/self which is affirmed through the realized--not the real. It is this metamorphic instability of the subject which theatre most dangerously represents.

In Brontë's work, the metamorphic subject (who is "grounded" in the catoptric subject) is crucial to the ontological and epistemological negotiations which take

place in her novels. The most striking of this is the perceptual/cognitive theatrics by means of which Rochester attempts to confound Jane and to persuade her that what she sees in his "shadow play" is reality. At Thornfield, where Rochester's authority is inscribed, Jane is thrown into a non-rational space where illusion prevails. Unable to plumb the depths of Thornfield's "reality" through reasoned observation alone, Jane is thrown onto the theatrical ground of Rochester's manipulations. Functioning unwittingly as the audience of Rochester's show, Jane is almost undone by illusion. Beginning with the performance of Grace, who stands in for Bertha as the source of the strange laughter Jane hears, the theatrics at Thornfield are designed in order to replace the real with the affect and effect of the real. In a series of theatrical episodes, Jane is gradually, unwittingly instructed to perform herself as an audience whose sight is almost completely invested in Rochester's realizations. The drawing-room performance of the Ingrams, the enactment of the charade tableaux, the performance by Rochester as the fortune-telling gypsy and, finally, the sham marriage (where Jane performs in the costume of Rochester's bride) all conspire to persuade Jane that what she sees and desires in Rochester's "shadow play" is real. Seduced into desiring the seeming reality of Rochester's realizations,

Jane dangerously conflates affect and effect, reality and seeming.

While Jane's sojourn at Thornfield points to the dangers of realization, the foregrounding of the power of realization also implicitly endorses the "art of effect" as an effective means of destabilizing the regulated and regulatory guarantees of the Lockean model of mind. In the theatrical space of Thornfield, reasoned perception is shown to be an inadequate guarantor of the real. By displacing the authenticity of the Lockean subject with a multiplicity of performed and performing subjects, Brontë also subverts the epistemological frame of the classical observer whose authenticity rests in the scopic apprehension of the external object. What we are shown in the "vice" of theatre which pervades Thornfield is that, on the abyssal stage of representation, there may be no ontological ground beyond realization. In fact, as I argue in my chapter on Jane Eyre, the movements of the subject in Jane Eyre never do come to rest in the seeming stability of the unitary observer, but are instead referred to an ineffable "ground" that strategically escapes rationalization.

Brontë's use of such theatrics suggests that her notion of vision and cognition includes an acute awareness of the ontological instabilities implicit in perception

and representation. As an artist involved in the overlappings of narrative, theatre and visual art, she could hardly have avoided the conundrum of realization. In fact, as she declares in a letter to W.S. Williams, the "art of effect" was integral to her programme as a writer:

> The Bells are very sincere in their worship of Truth, and they hope to apply themselves to the consideration of Art, so as to attain one day the power of speaking the language of conviction in the accents of persuasion. (SHLL 2:243)

In presenting "truth" or reality as she saw it, Brontë was aware that it must be couched in "accents of persuasion." She was aware, that is, that a degree of rhetorical theatrics was necessary in order to make the affect of "truth" effective. What she tried to achieve in her writing was an effective truth that would, as Lyndall Gordon suggests, inscribe a female experience that would not perpetuate the female self-enactments which have always been determined by a scopic field designed to affirm, through the reflective affect of the female self, the effective power of male authority.

3) Gender and the Protocols of Self-Enactment

In Lockean ontology where authenticity is based on the subject's divided relationship to an objective other, the theatrics of realization appear as a challenge to such binaristic constructions of self and other. When the

space of theatre overlaps the space of cognition and perception, the movement of the subject in camera shifts from the objective other to the spectral and specular enactments of the other/self in which the subject is realized. In the negotiation of such catoptric enactments, placed in conjunction with the authority of the Lockean eye, male and female selfhood is inscribed in Brontë's work. In her narratives, masculine authority is represented by the Lockean/Cartesian viewer whose power is invested in a scopic field where the object exists in order to confirm the authority of the viewer. Like the observer in the Panopticon, the power of the masculine observer resides in the disempowered visibility of the imprisoned other. What Brontë's work engages and resists is the naturalization of this contrivance. What this naturalized scopic authority wishes to deny is the ontological instability of an observer whose self-validating power is essentially reflective and representational. The hegemony of the Lockean/Cartesian eye depends on this suppression because its effects can only succeed when they can be persuasively projected as a seamless reality undisturbed by the stagecraft of representation.

As soon as the plurality of specular sight invades the optical space of the observer, the subject can no

longer claim the authenticity of a unified subject magisterially delineating itself over against the external otherness which is "reality." In the enclosure of the catoptric eye/I, where the specularity of sight always implicates the audience in the image, the sovereign viewer is split in the reflective other/self which is the site, not of reality, but of realization.[9] The moment the camera of the Lockean subject admits virtuality, the power of the unitary subject is compromised. It is this virtuality, the aporic play of representation in which the self can be endlessly reflected, replicated and metamorphosed, which must be denied and made illicit because it constitutes a threat to the naturalized hegemony of the Lockean eye. In the spaces constructed by Brontë's narratives, the scopic field of the authoritative observer is continually contested by the subversive emergences of a catoptric eye/I which strategically engages the play of representation in order to realize a female subjectivity that cannot otherwise manifest itself.

The issue of female self-realization was a difficult one in the nineteenth century because it was highly problematic for women to negotiate the field of vision--both as subjects and objects. Griselda Pollock, in Vision and Difference, describes how the nineteenth-century

bourgeoisie structured female social and cultural space by restricting women's access to the public sphere and by strictly regulating female visual behaviour:

> [T]he economic and social conditions of the existence of the bourgeoisie as a class are structurally founded upon inequality and difference in terms both of socio-economic categories and of gender. The ideological formations of the bourgeoisie negotiate these contradictions [i.e. these inequalities] by diverse tactics. One is the appeal to an imaginary order of nature which designates as unquestionable the hierarchies in which women, children, hands and servants (as well as other races) are posited as naturally different from and subordinate to white European man. . . . The public sphere, defined as the world of productive labour, political decision, government, education, the law and public service, increasingly became exclusive to men. The private sphere was the world [of] home, wives, children and servants.
> . . . For bourgeois women, going into town mingling with crowds of mixed social composition was not only frightening because it became increasingly unfamiliar, but because it was morally dangerous. It has been argued that to maintain one's respectability, closely identified with femininity, meant <u>not</u> exposing oneself in public. The public space was officially the realm of and for men; for women to enter it entailed unforseen risks. (67-9)

This differentiation, which created gender-specific public and private spheres, was one of the "ideological formations" that were used to naturalize the unequal status of women and men in bourgeois society:

> The public and private division functioned on many levels. As a metaphorical map in ideology, it structured the very meaning of the terms masculine and feminine within its mythic boundaries. . . . [I]t regulated women's and men's behaviour in their respective public and private spaces. Presence in either of the

> domains determined one's social identity . . . . (Pollock 69)

The boundaries of these gendered and engendering spaces are the "marginal or interstitial spaces where the fields of the masculine and feminine intersect and structure sexuality within a classed order" (Pollock 71). Unlike men, the naturalized occupants of public space, "[w]omen did not enjoy the freedom of incognito in the crowd. They were never positioned as the normal occupants of the public realm. They did not have the right to look, to stare, to scrutinize or watch" (Pollock 71).

In the scopic spaces of bourgeois engenderment, it was extremely difficult for women to appear _in propria persona_ without self-abnegation. One had the choice of being an illicit spectacle in public space or a licit but invisible presence in the privacy of domestic space. To appear in public was to appear as an alien, impossible object with no legitimate place in the scopic field. For a woman to be seen was an affront to a visual order which insisted that women could not appear except in roles already assigned by the hegemonic masculine observer who looked to the female object to complete his own status and power. Thus, for a middle-class woman to take the position of observing subject was problematic because, in the public arena, the only role in which women could see and be seen was the role of the prostitute. As Jules

Michelet (writing in the nineteenth-century) observes, a single woman who went out in the evening "would be taken for a prostitute." Even in daylight a woman could not enter a restaurant because "she would constitute an event; she would be a spectacle: All eyes would be constantly fixed on her, and she would overhear uncomplimentary and bold conjectures" (qtd. in Pollock 69). Certainly one of her father's own didactic poems would have left Brontë in no doubt as to the status of a woman who boldly sees and allows herself to be seen by men:

> The prostitute with faithless smiles,
> Remorseless plays her tricks and wiles,
> Her gestures bold, and ogling eye,
> Obtrusive speech and pert reply,
> And brazen front, and stubborn tone,
> Shew all her native virtues flown.

Bereft of her "native virtues" the prostitute is the paradigmatic actress whose unabashed stagecraft--the "brazen front," the "gestures bold," the "ogling eye" which make up the repertoire of her "tricks and wiles"--indicates a dangerous lack of authenticity. Completely constructed as an enactment, a patent realization, she represents a "false self" whose inauthenticity is threateningly effective, as Patrick Brontë goes on to demonstrate in his versified sermon:

> By her, the thoughtless youth is ta'en,
> Impoverished, disgraced or slain:
> Through her the marriage vows are broke,
> And Hymen proves a galling Yoke. (qtd. in Lock and Dixon 97)

Thus the prostitute is cast as an offensive spectacle within the scopic field of a purely masculine I/eye. Here she appears as an obtrusively performing phantom whose presence affirms the slippery ground of enactment to which, as a visible woman, she is consigned. This dangerously aporic ontology of the prostitute is designated as illicit in the field of masculine sight, which refers back to a male authenticity unavailable to the performing woman. By casting the prostitute as the illicit performer and her customers as licit, virtuously authentic dupes, ontological power remains with the cohesive self of a male subject set over against the illegitimate incohesion of the actress/prostitute.

Although the private sphere was considered to be the legitimate space of female being, the protocols of self-performance remained in play because the structure of feminine "authenticity" always paradoxically required performance. As Meisel notes, the coded performances of the prostitute were in some ways less anxiety-provoking than the performance of virtue in the space of domesticity. Already marked "with the dyer's hand," the "frank professional of one kind or another," (i.e. the actress or prostitute) does not dissemble her performing and is therefore less of a threat than the woman in the domestic sphere whose performances cannot be so easily

detected. In Meisel's discussion of Thackeray's Vanity Fair (a novel which Brontë admired enormously),[10] Becky Sharp is a professional actress whose obvious acting skills become more dangerous as she learns to perform in domesticated female roles that require the appearance of authenticity. "It is Becky's misfortune that in her world, in the only field of operations open to her, the serious muse is Domestic Sentiment, a line in which she is comparatively weak." However, "Becky learns; and as her roles improve, so does her technique. The real tears that were missing from some of her earlier performances later come at will" (332). This enactment of feeling is dangerous because, as Meisel says, "a woman who can act feelings cannot be known to have them, or can dissemble those she has" (333). In "an age that made a fetish of innocence," female virtue was invested in the "loving dependence" and womanly self-effacement exhibited by Amelia, the model of "clinging domesticity" (327). Set against Becky Sharpe's dissembling, Amelia's complete investment in "Domestic Sentiment" becomes the hallmark of her authenticity. In Amelia, the appearance of integrity seems uninfected by the vice of theatre which haunts Becky's self-enactments. With her unquestioning dependence on male power, Amelia enacts what is expected of her, a blind "authenticity" that naturalizes, through

its complicity and dependency, the framework of a masculine regime that excludes women from the public sphere and the empowering sight of the public man who can see and be seen with impunity.

In Brontë, such naturalized performances of authenticity come under scrutiny and are brought back into the problematic of theatre. In Villette, for instance, Polly, like Amelia, epitomizes the appearance of female authenticity; but she never becomes completely naturalized because, beneath her integrity, lies the threat of performance. At home, under the aegis of her father and Graham, she seems the perfect female subject. Devoting herself entirely to her father (she will not even attend school because he would suffer from her absence) and her husband, Polly is the "beau ideal" of proper female self-abnegation. A being "chastely lucent," she glows from within, seemingly illuminated by the purity and integrity of her feminine selfhood. A perfect contrast to the "wiles and tricks" of the prostitute, Polly appears as an authentic subject whose seeming integrity validates the self-abnegation required of her. As Luce Irigaray remarks, "the masquerade . . . is what women do . . . in order to participate in man's desire, but at the cost of giving up their own" (qtd. in Butler 47).

In fact, this picture of an integrated female self is

just that; it is a performance of integrity that is in collusion with a male scopic field which maintains power by perpetuating the myth of a female subject paradoxically but happily integrated in the space of domestic self-effacement to which she is consigned. As earlier episodes imply, the integrity of Polly's "lucent" selfhood is suspect, particularly with regard to Graham. Indeed, Lucy notices in the early days at La Terrace that Polly's relationship with Graham is markedly theatrical:

> One would have thought the child had no mind or life of her own, but must necessarily live, move and have her being in another: now that her father was taken from her, she nestled to Graham, and seemed to feel by his feelings: to exist in his existence. She learned the names of all his schoolfellows in a trice; she got by heart their characters as given from his lips . . . . She never forgot, or confused identities: she would talk with him the whole evening about people she had never seen, and appear completely to realize their aspect, manners, and dispositions. Some she learned to mimic: an under-master, who was an aversion of young Bretton's, had, it seems, some peculiarities which she caught up in a moment from Graham's representation and rehearsed for his amusement . . . . (30)

Far from appearing as herself, Polly performs herself in order to be seen by her male audience, Graham. To remain as a presence in his scopic field, she shapes herself into a reflection of him, a "beautiful reality" who presents herself as a tableau for his amusement. Hers is, in fact, a phantomic presence, a fact which Lucy notes when she describes Polly's "haunting" presence in a room whose

Jane hears, the theatrics at Thornfield are designed in order to replace the real with the affect and effect of the real. In a series of theatrical episodes, Jane is gradually, unwittingly instructed to perform herself as an audience whose sight is almost completely invested in Rochester's realizations. The drawing-room performance of the Ingrams, the enactment of the charade tableaux, the performance by Rochester as the fortune-telling gypsy and, finally, the sham marriage (where Jane performs in the costume of Rochester's bride) all conspire to persuade Jane that what she sees and desires in Rochester's "shadow play" is real. Seduced into desiring the seeming reality of Rochester's realizations, Jane dangerously conflates affect and effect, reality and seeming.

While Jane's sojourn at Thornfield points to the dangers of realization, the foregrounding of the power of realization also implicitly endorses the "art of effect" as an effective means of destabilizing the regulated and regulatory guarantees of the Lockean model of mind. In the theatrical space of Thornfield, reasoned perception is shown to be an inadequate guarantor of the real. By displacing the authenticity of the Lockean subject with a multiplicity of performed and performing subjects, Brontë also subverts the epistemological frame of the classical observer whose authenticity rests in the scopic apprehension of the external object. What we are shown in

has approved her self-enactment. As Lucy suggests when she tells us that M. Paul's spaniel reminds her of Polly, Polly's appearance of selfhood may well be in collusion with an order of vision that not only contains women in the domestic sphere but makes pets of them through the agency of willing self-effacement.

Thus the idea of the domestic self requires of women a paradoxical enactment of authenticity that cannot be seen to be an enactment in order to maintain its legitimacy. As Judith Butler suggests, "masquerade may be understood as the performative production of sexual ontology, an appearing that makes itself convincing as a 'being'" (47).[11] Always consigned to the level of realization, always appearing as a representation in the audience's eye, female selfhood becomes a matter of appearing rather than being. Forced to function on the level of seeming, blinded by the sight imposed by masculine vision and desire, the female subject can neither see with its own eyes nor claim the truth-discerning power of the sighted masculine subject.

Such conventional female enactments constitute a theatrics in collusion with the self-empowering strategies of male vision. In this context Polly's self-enactment can be seen as an analogue of such seemingly powerful female personae such as Mrs. Reed, Blanche Ingram, Madame Beck

and her earlier incarnation, Mdlle. Reuter. Certainly Blanche's too-obvious social theatrics constitutes a performance which (were it not for the legitimating space of domestic life) borders on the brazenness of the prostitute; but the other women are also, in their own ways, performers in collusion with the naturalized optics of male self-empowerment.

Mrs. Reed, for instance, who denounces Jane as an actress, seeks to maintain her own power by aligning herself with the optical regime of male authority. Like her son, Mrs. Reed wishes to affirm her ownership of the territory she inhabits. To do so, she uses the strategies of male hegemony; she accuses Jane (who threatens the "reality" of this framework through her passionate rebellions) of being an actress, a false person who cannot therefore lay claim to any legitimacy. Watching Jane with her unsympathetic eye, which is blindly antagonistic to Jane's impassioned selfhood, Mrs. Reed intends to frame Jane as an alien, illegitimate object in her field of vision. A member of the alliance Jane calls "Reed, Brocklehurst & Co," (75), which is dedicated to self-empowerment at Jane's expense, Mrs. Reed represents a woman whose selfhood is invested in her alignment with male authority. Yet, as Jane implies when she calls her a liar, Mrs. Reed is herself an actress wholly intent on

maintaining a male-oriented power which requires her to be inimical to the kind of rebellious selfhood which Jane represents.

Similarly, Mdlle. Reuter, and Madame Beck, both consummate actresses, are powerful to the extent that they can perform themselves in accordance with male practices.[12] Madame Beck, with her cold eye and dispassionate demeanour, maintains a disinterested sight that draws its authority from its mimicking of an optics based on the masculine observer whose uninflected eye/I and clarity of vision carries the mark of truth and all-seeing power. But, like Polly in her far more feminized performance, these are all necessarily compromised performances which refer the female subject not to authenticated selfhood, but back into the insubstantial theatrics of female selfhood. Mrs. Reed, for instance, dies bereft, a cipher still wilfully blinded by her own stony gaze. Although Mdlle. Reuter and Madame Beck both achieve some degree of authority within the semi-private and semi-domestic precincts of their schools, their power is also equivocal. Madame Beck, while she can see and be seen within the pensionnat, must nevertheless slip into incognito when she goes out of an evening to attend the opera or indulge in other public pleasures. As Lucy sees her, she is, as much as Polly, a puppet whose mechanisms

operate according to the dictates of a male audience. Like Mdlle. Reuter whom Crimsworth identifies as "a lump of wax and wood" (108), Madame Beck is a waxwork, an effigy of a self which cannot be manifested at all within the scopic field of male hegemony. In a framework of vision which is based on a masculine catoptrics of self-empowerment, it is a given that no performance of female selfhood can succeed in referring back to an authentic female self because such a performance must reflect masculine authority, not female subjectivity. However empowered such performances may seem, they are always, ultimately, reflections of the male eye/I in which is inscribed the illegitimacy of the female I/eye.

What remains to be done on this paradoxical, self-defeating ground of female self-enactment is to resist the premises on which the masculine scopic field is based, to foreground its self-empowering contrivances so that performance itself no longer appears as an illegitimate female theatrics, but becomes the very matrix of self-realization. Placed in the aporic framework of theatre, the ontology and epistemology of selfhood becomes relative to the play of representation where truth and meaning are negotiated and made negotiable. Made "from the play of meaning in a structure of becoming" (Blau 57), theatre becomes the epistemological/ontological form that most

powerfully acknowledges the play of selfhood which the regulatory optics of the male subject wishes to codify and control.

As Blau notes, the Cartesian camera of authoritative vision also defined theatre as a space within the scopic control of its sovereign viewer:

> By the time Richelieu sat in the best seat of the Salle de la Comedie, privacy had merged with the public, and what the spectator was seeing . . . was the self-constructed image of rationality, cynosure of a perfect geometry. . . . Richelieu's power seemed to be not internal vision but purely visual, as if the lines of perspective were drawn from his eyes.(339)

Here, functioning authoritatively as both see-er and seen, Richelieu constitutes the focal point of power, the site of the I/eye that reflects to itself its own sovereignty. What happens on the stage is merely an affirmation of this power which the scopic arrangement of the audience, who has come to view the power within the play, also affirms. Thus the space of theatre is appropriated to the uses of an observer whose unquestioned power orients and limits the play of representation to the parameters of his eye/I.

As I argue in my chapter on The Professor, this is a strategy which Crimsworth employs in The Professor to control the field of representation in his narrative. In his attempts to inscribe himself as a Cartesian viewer in camera, Crimsworth exhibits his desire to construct

himself as the unitary perceiver in whom rests the authority of the sovereign observer whose sight reflects his power. Struggling to appropriate the visual field so that it reflects the power of his own I/eye, Crimsworth wishes to deny the subjectivity of the women he constructs in his narrative and proposes to make of them mere enactments and reflections of his self-interested gaze. What he must deny in the process is the contrivance of this Cartesian theatrics.

By shifting attention from the naturalized premises of male hegemony to the stagecraft of its power-seeking enactments, Brontë ironizes masculine optics and subtly constructs them within the framework of their own stagecraft where they appear strategic and therefore not essentially truth-producing. Like the figurations of the *camera obscura*, which contextualize the truth-seeing eye of the Lockean beholder as a mechanism which regulates the catoptric play of signification, the foregrounding of the stagecraft of self-realization places a wedge in the seemingly seamless reality constituted by a unitary male subject whose all-encompassing vision structures the naturalized enactment of female authenticity. This ironizing framework, as I suggest in the following chapter, is evident even in Brontë's earliest writing, where the field of the male gaze is often interrupted and

interrogated by the subtle emergence of its contrivances. In the juvenilia, as much as in the later works, the stagecraft of male self-representation and self-empowerment emerges reflectively in the ironizing disruptions of female enactments which do not seamlessly re-present, in the "audience room" of Cartesian theatre, the scopic will to power of the male eye/I.

By contextualizing such control of theatre as itself theatrical, Brontë allows the play of representation to invade the seeming sureties of the Cartesian/Lockean frame which empowers masculine vision and renders the female subject as a spurious enactment which, over against the male eye/I, merely reflects that power. By thus reframing the frame, Brontë subverts the seeming seamlessness of the Cartesian arrangement of see-er and seen, performer and audience. What Brontë's ironic contextualizations convey is that the gendered protocols of subjectivity are staged constructions that, for all their entrenched power, are embedded in the aporic movement of representation in which certain spaces have been staked out as "real" and certain enactments have been naturalized as "true."

By casting the ontology of the male subject in doubt through the inscription of its own enactments, Brontë's ironic disclosure of the unsettling theatricality of dominant selfhood also unsettles the hegemony in which

female theatrics are embedded. When ontological purity and surety are cast into doubt, power becomes patently a matter of manipulating the theatricalized optics of self-presentation. Once the contrivances of the hegemonic subject are brought to light, the empowering solidity of male ontology and the disempowering collusive performances of female authenticity appear strategically in keeping with a masculine power structure.

Thus, in the spaces of Brontë's novels, theatre is never absent but becomes the ground of seeming against which the seen will always appear to be provisional, an enactment invested with more or less power, depending on its alignments with the controlling framework in which it operates. Whoever appears in these spaces, does so in relation to these alignments and not as an autonomous eye/I emerging out of unadulterated authenticity, whatever professions of authentic selfhood might be made. This interplay of enactments is critical to the expression of gender as a performative activity. As Judith Butler states, "There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender;. . . identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (25). In the space of subjectivity, which is prohibitive to any emergence of the female subject, self-realization for women becomes so problematic that, to

emerge in the visual field at all, is to be collusive. For this reason, women must appear at the liminal sites and in the liminal processes where realization can be achieved without appropriation by the male gaze, where female selfhood can be enacted without falling into a reflective completion of the masculine eye/I. In Brontë's work, this strategic theatrics of the female subject emerges in enactments that refuse to cohere into a shape reflecting the authority of the male gaze. In place of the conforming female self-enactment which affirms the ontology of the male subject, Brontë proposes what Blau terms the "ontological non-sequitur" (7) of a theatrics that alienates and brings to light the stagecraft in which its naturalizations are embedded. The non-collusive female subject appears as a shadowy, liminal presence who does not have the affect and effect of a prescribed and naturalized feminine performance and who wilfully rejects the specular realizations of a male-oriented theatrics. Operating between being and realization, between seeing and seeming, between substance and shadow, the non-collusive female subject constructs itself as a metamorphosing non-entity which subversively refuses to render itself up in the male scopic field as the disempowered object of male desire. In contrast to the coded theatricality of actresses like Polly and Madame

Beck, these subversive enactments of metamorphic selfhood work as a kind of doubled haunting: an ironizing theatrics that questions the naturalized theatrics of entrenched male/female self-constructions. Such ironic hauntings are evident in Frances Henri's shadowy, liminal appearances which resist Crimsworth's self-important construction of her as the compliant object of his magisterial perception. Jane Eyre, too, whose slight, shadowy self is typically obscured in the liminal space of the window-seat, becomes a rebellious liminal presence who engages yet resists alignment with the authoritative spaces and enactments that would frame her as the powerless reflection of a masculine will to power. The even more heretic and recalcitrant Lucy Snowe, who consciously refuses to enact the collusive and complacent selfhoods she sees in the performances of Polly, Ginevra and Madame Beck, strategically fails to take shape as a substance and appears as elusive and shadowy as the "dun mist" of her self-protective colouring. Paradoxically realized in their resistance to realization, these liminal subjectivities become the sites of a "becoming," a movement of irreducible seeming that refuses to fall into the stability of the seen.

By foregrounding theatricality and assigning a resistant power to the play of unstable, incomplete self-

representation, Brontë achieves in her narrative the construction of a female self that exists in ineffability, in the occult theatrics of the unrealized and unrealizable. To be resistant to realization, to remain shadowy and liminal, is also to affirm the possibility of enacting oneself otherwise, in a manner unvisualizable and unenvisioned by the optics of male power. In Brontë, the investment in liminality, in the shadowy affect which witholds the effect of masculine self-reflection, is an investment in the displacement of the naturalized framework of male and female engenderment. Brontë's is a profound investment in theatre that restructures the epistemology of the self to reflect its non-sequiturs, its incompleteness, those spaces of being that are not as readily known and coded as the eye/I of masculine authority would like to pretend. Thus, the subversive nonentity of Frances Henri, the rebellious liminality of Jane Eyre and the "ontological non-sequiturs" of Lucy Snowe, are all manifestations of a resistant theatricality that articulates what lies beyond the scopic field of a Cartesian theatrics where female self-performance must always be complicit with male subjectivity.

As in Artaud's surrealist theatre, whose premises are also evident in the ontological obscurities of Brontë's novels, this is a theatrics that aims at the "beyond" of

sight.[13] The eye/I in which Brontë's work is embedded is directed, like Artaud's eye "at the outermost limit of vision where the scopic drive would cease" (Blau 83). What her work always keeps in sight is the nothingness on which theatre is "based," the abyssal gap between see-er and seen where the shadow of female being might be projected. As Blau tells us, "In theatre which is 'no thing' it becomes a question of naming shadows, preparing the way for a new generation of shadows" (Blau 84).

In a chapter entitled "The Unseen Space," Lyndall Gordon says of Brontë that "'Shadow' recurs in her writings, not as a feebleness but as a potency that goes unseen" (4). By creating in her narratives an "unseen space" where the shadows of prophetic being might be enacted, Brontë works towards an epistemology and aesthetics of potentiation which, while they have no place in the self-empowering structures of masculine epistemology, leave open the possibility of resistance and subversion by this "potency that goes unseen." From her earliest works to her masterwork, Villette, Brontë develops narratives that, while they do not deny the structures that disempower women and hurt women, still allow for the subversive emergence of resistant female spaces and enactments that cannot be entirely appropriated to the purposes of masculine self-empowerment.

Chapter III

Satirizing Genius: Male Sublimity and Female Accomplishment in Brontë's Juvenilia

In all of Brontë's works, the spaces women occupy are the physical and psychic spaces in which female subjects perform themselves under the regime of the masculine gaze. The repressive enclosures of female subjectivity are embedded in many areas of male/female interaction, but one of the most important of these areas is the field of artistic production. The arena of cultural discourse was especially relevant to Brontë who had to make her mark as an artist from within the enclosure of the private and the domestic spheres to which she, too, was confined by the gendered requirements of female self-representation.

Unlike the published novels, which were shaped under the pressures of possible public display, the juvenilia was an intensely private discourse hidden, by means of its microscopic script, from the inhibiting authority of adult eyes.[1] Written secretly in miniaturized form, Brontë's early writings themselves exemplify the issues with which she was engaged. The fictionalized selves which she develops in these writings are experimental explorations of those structures which preclude the emergence of women as aesthetic creators in their own right. Always kept in confinement, enclosed and hidden away from the field of

masculine cultural activity, the women in these "invisible" narratives are as solipsistically privatized as Brontë's miniaturized manuscripts. Able to enact themselves only in the "sanctuary" of the hidden spaces where they cannot contest the power of the male arbiters of culture, the female characters of the juvenilia are studies in the privatization and disempowerment of female cultural discourse. In the early writings, in particular, we see Brontë coming to terms with the aesthetic discourses and the aesthetic postures which disallow the validity of female creativity. Here the salons, boudoirs, and domestic chambers where the wives and mistresses of her Byronic "hero" are kept, are representative of the cognitive and bodily spaces which invalidate female creative expression and affirm the aesthetic/epistemological structures of a hegemonic, male-engendered culture.

For some commentators, Brontë's early writing appears as a naive overinvestment in the paradigms of Romanticism. Focussing on the seductive, Byronic qualities of her main male character (Arthur, Marquis of Douro, who later becomes Zamorna, King of Angria), these critics tend to see Brontë's fascination with her Romantic hero as a sign of her collusion in the masochistic destruction of his female victims.[2] However, as Sally Shuttleworth notes,

Brontë's juvenilia demonstrates, not a collusive obsession with a Byronic hero, but a dramatization of those Romantic structures that support the creative supremacy of the male intellect at the expense of the female self:

> Brontë's representations of femininity in her early writings dramatize in uncompromising form, the negative and constraining implications of cultural constructions of the feminine in Victorian culture. (109)

Among the main concerns in Brontë's early works are the "negative" implications of a Romanticism that, for all its resistance to a regime that favours the rational ordering of subject/object relations, strategically fails to legitimate the creative female subject. Refusing to accommodate women except within the marginalized privacies of female enclosure, Romanticism reconstructed the _camera_ of the authoritative observer as an exclusively masculine, ego-expanding site of sublime creativity. Far from colluding with this male-oriented Romanticism, Brontë's juvenilia investigates its dynamic, a point which Shuttleworth emphasizes:

> The central organizing trope for the early writings is not, as critics have tended to assume, the ideology of romantic love to which the female characters so desperately cling, but rather the dynamics of male struggles for power. (120)

In these writings, Brontë's interest is directed at discovering and articulating those areas of conflict and resistance where the spaces and pressures of masculine

Romanticism restrict women's access to the self-empowering, ego-expanding structures of masculine creative authority. While she creates female characters who experience and even embrace Romanticism's victimization of the female self, she also addresses the destructive arrogation of power implicit in male aesthetic postures, that demands this self-immolation of women.

In particular, Brontë's early work addresses concepts of genius and the sublime which, in Romantic and Victorian discourse, established the male subject as the sole arbiter and possessor of empowered creativity. However, Brontë also displays and satirically undermines those masculine strategies designed to perpetuate this authoritative discourse. Although it is often overlooked, the satirical mode of Brontë's juvenilia must be taken into account because it interrogates the self-validating postures of authority displayed by the male figures in her stories. While she does not bring female consciousness to centre stage as she does later in Jane Eyre and Villette, Brontë does begin, in her early work, to experiment with ironic perspectives that contextualize and de-naturalize the aesthetic postures of male authority which rely on concepts of genius and the sublime that excluded women from the field of high culture.

Although Romantic revisions of the Lockean model of mind made room for a creative subject, these revisions did not improve the status of women within the network of paradigms which adapted Locke's metaphor to accommodate gendered theories of sublime experience and creative genius. Romantics like Coleridge reshaped Locke's metaphor of mind to give it a vital creative power to envision its imaginings. However, as a passage from Table Talk[3] attests, his ideas of mind and genius excluded women from the upper echelons of creative being:

> Women have their heads in their hearts. Man seems to have been destined for a superior being. I think women generally better creatures than men. They have weaker appetites and weaker intellects, but much stronger affections. A man with a bad heart has sometimes been saved by a strong head; but a corrupt woman is lost forever (Table Talk 117)

Of course, Coleridge throws in the standard sop that women, because of their strongly affectionate natures, were "better creatures" than men. But, for all that, men are superior beings whose intellects are powerful enough to lift them out of moral peril; whereas women, lacking this gift and relying only on "strong affections," are in danger of slipping into an unredeemable corruption.

In the discourse of the sublime, which relates to the concepts of mind in which genius was embedded,[4] women were consigned to a conceptual space where mind, body and domestic seclusion could all be encompassed in a self-

structure that ensured the non-sublimity of female intellectual and artistic production. The anonymous author of a pamphlet entitled Woman As She Is And As She Should Be (1839) describes the situation quite bluntly "Power of mind *is* sexual: that vigour of genius which distinguishes man is rarely to be found in the opposite sex; in a word, woman is a creature less intellectual than man" (qtd. in Björk 40). Cast in a domestic mold which demanded subservience and self-effacement, not originality and transcendence, the female mind, unable to claim genius, was constructed as something far more petty and circumscribed than the exalted, magisterial and creative male intellect. In Peter de Bolla's words, sublime discourse

> produces the subject and produces it in gender-differentiated terms because the discourse of the sublime operates the hard distinction between the masculine experience of power, authority and sublimity, and the feminine experience of subjection, obedience and beauty. (It hardly needs pointing out how powerful these figures have been in Western conceptualizations of subjectivity). (58)

As W.J.T. Mitchell observes of Burke's construction of sublimity, such gendered concepts of the sublime tended to align themselves within an "aesthetics of domination":

> Burke's . . . elaboration of gender difference makes it clear that he regards it not just as a matter of sensory or aesthetic decorum but as a figure for the natural foundations of all political and cosmic order, the universal structure of domination, mastery and slavery: "The sublime . . . always dwells on great

> objects, and terrible; the [beautiful] on small ones and pleasing; we submit to what we admire, but we love what submits to us" (II 3). This natural aesthetics of domination extends from the family ("the authority of a father . . . hinders us from having that entire love for him that we have for our mothers") (III), to the state (fear and admiration are the emotions properly evoked by the leader), to the terrors of the father god. (130)

It is the feminized attribute of beauty that, as de Bolla notes, is associated with an unsublimated triviality of expression resulting from an over-concern with ornamentation (another feminine attribute). According to Hugh Blair, whom Bolla cites, beauty represents an emasculation of the sublime:

> Now, when an author has brought us, or is attempting to bring us, into this state [sublimity]: if he decks the Sublime object which he presents to us round and round, with glittering ornaments; nay, if he throws in any one decoration that sings in the least below the capital image, that moment he alters the key; he relaxes the tension of the mind; the strength of the feeling is emasculated; the Beautiful may remain but the Sublime is gone. (Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres qtd. in de Bolla 58)

In an article in Blackwood's entitled "Men and Women; Brief Hypothesis Concerning the Difference in their Genius," which appeared in 1824, John Neal[5] associates the highest modes of thought and creativity with transcendence of "animal sensibility." It is the inability to shed this "sensibility" that will always distinguish female from male genius. As the author points out, in a comparison of the work of Rubens and Angelica Kaufmann, the work of the

woman artist will be imbued with the sensitive but more trivial characteristic of the female who cannot transcend her "animal" nature:

> And so, do I contend, would be the manifestation of female genius, in every other department of art or science. It would be less courageous, magnificent, and sublime. But it would be more delicate, beautiful, and affecting. The woman would be found lurking in whatever she did. There would be more tenderness, more delicacy, more timidity in it. (390)

Men of genius, by contrast, are capable of abstracting themselves from their bodily and sensory containment in order to inhabit the regions of the sublime:

> . . . no man of acute animal sensibility _can_ think so severely; and those who are able so to think _prove_, thereby, that, whatever their animal sensibility may have been, it _is_ no longer sufficiently active, or troublesome, to interfere with the sublime abstractions of the mind when men become all intellect, all soul. (391)

Thus, there is no sublimity to hope for in women. Although, given education and opportunity, a "giantess, like Joanna Baillie, or Madame De Staël may appear now and then,"

> she will be in certain points only a _female_ giant--no match for the male giants. She might be able to overlook the second class of men; but the first class would certainly overlook her. (390)

When even a giantess must be overlooked by men because she can only be a giantess of the second class, there is no

possibility of rising to the Godlike reaches of sublime male intellect and genius.

For Coleridge, as for the author of "Men and Women," women are constituted by feeling and "animal sensibilities," not by the faculties of intellect and genius. Unable to expand themselves into regions where male genius becomes "pure intellect, pure soul" they are confined to the space of the body which determines the limitations of the female mind. Just as their confinement to the domestic sphere prohibits their "expansion" into the authoritative sphere of public space, female bodies and minds are prohibited from transcending the enclosures they occupy. Thus, for women, the space of the <u>camera obscura</u> would seem accessible only as the circumscribed space of a selfhood tied to its domestic and bodily enclosures and dissociated from the space of the male subject who claims for himself the transcendence of a sovereign, Godlike sublimity that marks his authority as the "overseer" of cultural and social discourse. With their embodied "genius," the triviality of their accomplishments, their domestic confinement, women can be seen in relation to the <u>camera obscura</u>/mind as the unsublimated "containers" of a second-rate subjectivity whose creativity is merely carnally procreative and derivative.

This is not to say that ideas of creative genius and bodily procreation did not overlap at times. When they did, however, it was always by way of transcending such carnal symbolism through the divine operations of male genius. Héraud, for instance, in "Poetical Genius," extends the idea of the creative mind to include the gestation and birth of a work of art:

> We call, then, on the poet, as the representative of Genius--Imagination--Fancy! Human creator! partaker with Deity of his most incommunicable attribute!. . . . Would a mere exertion of memory, a mere recalling of images, require this delphic fury--the preternatural possession--this frenzy? Such are the convulsions which attend the labour of genius and the travail of imagination, not of recollection. (60)

Here Héraud (who is responding to the Lockean model of mind) transforms the container of the Lockean mind and its memory-images into a womb-like enclosure with the power not merely to collect and recall, but also to generate the original and divine productions of imagination and genius. This Romantic revision of the camera obscura/mind appropriates womb-imagery to serve the purposes of sublime transcendence which, as we have seen is a definitively masculine form of creativity. It is the male, God-impregnated genius who exalts this mental obstetrics through the sublime transcendence of his poetry.

Women, of course, remain in symbolic nether regions where metaphors of conception and birth remain linked to

female carnality. The organ that was thought to occupy the female head and (along with the heart) to displace what little reasoning power the female mind might have possessed, was the uterus.

> Hysteria, the disease with which Freud so famously began his investigations into the dynamic connections between <u>psyche</u> and <u>soma</u>, is by definition a "female disease," not so much because it takes its name from the Greek word for womb, <u>hyster</u> (the organ which was in the nineteenth century supposed to "cause' this emotional disturbance), but because hysteria did occur mainly among women in turn-of-the-century Vienna, and because throughout the nineteenth century this mental illness, like many other nervous disorders, was thought to be caused by the female reproductive system . . . . (Gilbert and Gubar 53)

In this body/<u>camera</u>, the female "mind" is incarnated as an organ of sexual reproduction, a dark space that instinctively procreates but cannot create sublime art, an incarnation that is in striking contrast to Coleridge's statement (reminiscent of Young Soult's) that genius makes "nature thought and thought nature" so that the "body is but a striving to become mind. . . . " (494). What the eye of this female <u>camera</u> sees, in contrast to the male who sees himself reflected in the divine panorama of his creative vision, is the female flesh that conceives and expands only in blind response to the reproductive imperative of the body. Christine Battersby, in <u>Gender and Genius</u>, admirably sums up the situation:

> The psychology of woman was used as a foil to genius: to show what merely apes genius.

> Biological femaleness mimics the psychological femininity of the true genius. Romanticism, which started out by opening a window of opportunity for creative women, developed a phraseology of cultural apartheid . . . with women among the categories counted as not-fully-human. The genius was a male,--full of 'virile' energy--who transcended his biology: the male genius was "feminine" which merely proved his cultural superiority. Creativity was displaced male procreativity: male sexuality made sublime. Females, however, were represented either as lacking in sexual drive, or as incapable of resisting their sexuality. The creative woman was an anomaly who simply introduced complications into the patterns of exclusion. (3)

In the context of these highly gendered notions of genius, the female camera becomes a "presence room" that is not a sovereign space of intellect and genius, but an eroticized enclosure in which the female subject is constructed as incarnate and unsublimated. Richardson's "Lovers Camera Obscura," the secret space where the private discourse of "courtship and marriage" is to be discussed, is thus a feminized space, out of the public gaze, where erotic negotiations take place. When Grandison suggestively asks if he might "make a Lover's Camera Obscura" he implies that the camera obscura is a site of seduction, a place where the female body can be appropriated to male desire. It is emphatically not a space of mentation or sublime creativity, but an enclosure which, like the female body itself, is consigned to sexual rather than sublime intercourse. This sexualized

embodiment of women and the spaces (both psychic and material) which they occupy was culturally significant because it not only illegitimized and trivialized female subjectivity as something always incarnate, but ascribed to women an organic propensity which manifested itself as a subservience both to male intellect and male desire.

Brontë (who knew Burke's Essay, was required to memorize long passages from Blair's Lectures[6] and might well have read the article in Blackwood's) would have been fully aware of the gendered connotations of the sublime in relation to the female mind and its capacity (or incapacity) for genius. She would have known that, when women performed on the cultural stage, it was not as producers of high art but as performers who were to be seen as artworks in themselves. As Ann Bermingham notes, women were expected to be artistic; they were not expected to become artists:

> Unlike the artist who was a creator and producer of culture, [a woman] was a consumer and reproducer of culture. The word "artistic" inscribes art on to the body and into the personality of the subject who makes art. "Artistic types" are works of art themselves, embodying art without necessarily mastering it.(7)

Incapable of creation herself, the aestheticized female constituted (like the "authentically" domestic female) an enactment designed to reflect a male subject/observer who saw in her the embodiment of his own desire and mastery.

Certainly Brontë would have been aware of the cultural prohibitions that made it impossible for women to create themselves within the context of art-making as anything other than the reflective objects of male vision and representation. For one thing, the time-honoured traditions of the marriage market required women to attract male "buyers" by displaying themselves in a visually enticing manner, thereby affirming their role as objects of male consumption. Already commodified and objectified by the protocols of female display, women's talents and accomplishments were a priori merely props in this performance. As Ann Bermingham explains:

> The growing importance of accomplishments in the education of young women in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth century has to do, in part, with changes in the customs of display. By the early nineteenth century, the habit of displaying marriageable girls in the public spaces of popular spa towns gave way to a more private market. This distrust of the town coupled with the growing taste for private rather than public entertainment meant that unmarried women were increasingly intended to be seen within their domestic surroundings. The accomplishment is directly tied to this new construction of the domestic space as the space of authentic subjectivity. In this sense, accomplishments should not simply be understood as a way for women with increasingly too much time on their hands to fill idle hours, but as ways for women to perform their subjectivity through certain allotted modes of artistic expression. . . . [A]ccomplishments provided an opportunity to display themselves while denying that this was in fact what was happening. Men, in turn, could look while seeming to listen, or size up a woman while appearing to judge a drawing. (4-5)

Thus the space of domesticity became the site of a female aesthetic that was directed at the marketing of the female body. In place of the expansive camera of sublime male genius and imagination, the camera of female creativity was prohibitively inscribed in domestic terms as a space where women enacted their embodiment in the eyes of men who controlled and owned them.

Brontë's awareness of the accomplished woman's aesthetic powerlessness is evident in the story of Marian Hume (Zamorna's first wife) who is an exemplar of feminine cultural performance.[7] Marian, who fades away and dies when her husband's indifference to her renders her life meaningless, is so dependent upon masculine constructions of female selfhood that, without the gaze of her lord's eye upon her, she cannot live at all. Her "Last Will and Testament" is a testament to her adherence to the protocols of female accomplishment:

> To the said Julia, Lady Sydney, I likewise leave all my Italian books, my music, both bound and in sheets, my harp and my grand piano. . .. To Lily, Marchioness of Fidena, I leave my silver dressing-box, my gold-tipt case of scented waters, my alabaster clock set round with large topazes, and the ruby claspt Bible, Prayer Book and Psalter which lie on my toilet. To Ellen Grenville I leave all my botanical books and apparatus, my paintings of fruit and flowers, my pencil sketches and all my drawing materials. To Edward de Lisle, artist, I leave my collection of one hundred miniatures on ivory, set in tortoiseshell cases with gold clasps and hinges. To Alexander Soult I leave my uniform edition of the French classics bound in watered satin, gilt and lettered. The rest of the books

> contained in my rosewood bookcase I leave to Sir John Fowler and likewise my satinwood desk, with the diamond pen, gold inkstand, wafer vase and sand glass, contained therein. (EEW 2.1:318-19)

The effect of this document is to emphasize the triviality of Marian's pursuits. Her level of aesthetic accomplishment is indicated by her collection of "one hundred miniatures on ivory" and a jumble of "cameos, intaglios and shells." Her scientific investigations are represented by some "botanical books and apparatus," and her artistic endeavours by "pencil sketches" and "paintings of fruit and flowers." Her interest in literature is displayed in a "uniform edition of the French classics, bound in watered satin, gilt and lettered." Her "ruby claspt Bible, Psalter and Prayer Book" lie on the toilet table (an arrangement emphasizing the debased, self-ornamenting nature of Marian's spiritual reading), together with a "gold-tipt case of scented waters" and an alabaster clock set round with large topazes." As if to emphasize her lack of selfhood, Marian's "Last Will and Testament" reduces her to an assortment of objects whose ornamental and material value far outweighs any spiritual, intellectual or creative properties these objects might express. Like Marian herself, who is merely one of Zamorna's possessions, the objects Marian leaves behind have no life beyond their existence as items of economic exchange. At her death,

Marian has evidently reached the "pinnacle" of accomplished banality and has dutifully surrounded herself with the visually and materially seductive examples of literature, art, science and theology that reflect her own objectification and commodification. As Bermingham says,

> the accomplished woman's role was to consume art in order to be exchanged as art, and it was her very skills as a consumer--her taste and discrimination in choosing and displaying those commodities that would be an extension of her subjectivity--that in turn would determine how she was consumed. (13)

A woman who rigorously adheres to the policy that her femininity depends on the absence of any untoward evidence of genuine creativity, Marian is the quintessentially correct woman, a "meek and gentle spirit, utterly devoid of contradiction" whose role in life is played out the moment she no longer has access to the audience of her husband's eye.

In an earlier story, "The Secret," Brontë demonstrates how Zamorna's destructive mastery over his wife depends, in part, on his role as the overseer of her artistic productions. At the opening of the story, Zamorna (who has come to castigate his wife over an imagined rebellion against his authority) enters Marian's apartment and finds her "engaged in finishing a pencil sketch." When he asks her what she is about, Marian replies that it is "only a little landscape." Zamorna

(barely glancing at the drawing) does not bother to contradict this self-deprecation and dismissively judges the work, in the conventional phrases reserved for "artistic" productions of the female kind, as a "really very pretty, and most charmingly pencilled" drawing (EEW 2.1:274-75). Here, the easy and thoughtless confidence of Zamorna's judgement identifies him as a member of the priesthood of high culture whose patronizing assessment of her little landscape is meant to reflect his authority and her triviality. Through his magisterial use of the adjectives "pretty," "little," and "charming," Zamorna invokes not only his own aesthetic superiority in relation to the insignificant beauties of Marian's production, but also, in the same stroke, suggests that the drawing is merely a reflection of Marian who is also "pretty," "little" and "charming." Thus, when he gives short shrift to Marian's drawing, he also rejects Marian and thereby consigns both "art objects" to the limbo of his disregard. When Zamorna leaves the room (having achieved the object of subduing his wife), Marian's pencil "falters" and her tears fall "unheeded" on the little drawing. "[W]ith a deep sigh," she continues with her "half-finished" drawing. However,

> the pencil seemed to have lost its power, or the hand which directed it, its skill. Instead of the flowing, correct lines and soft shadows which she had before produced, tremulous,

> wavering strokes and dark blotches mocked her unavailing efforts (EEW 2.1:278).

Unable to retain her husband's lordly regard, Marian and her drawing both collapse in a display of aesthetic failure which reflects her "blotted" role as an accomplished wife. The dependent charms of both her art and her person simply cannot exist without the audience of a masculine authority whose regard alone validates her self-performance.

Zenobia, who is Marian's rival and antithesis, proves the powerlessness even of gifted women to enact themselves legitimately outside the authority of a male gaze which demands to see in women the embodiment of a subservient, cultured domesticity. Unlike Marian, who is small, pale and passive, Zenobia is physically and intellectually impressive. She is "very tall" with features that are "regular and finely formed." Her "brilliant eyes" are as black as "the luxuriant tresses of her richly curled hair," and her "lively eloquence" cannot be matched, "even by Madame de Staël" (EEW 1:293). Zenobia, whose activities include "reading Herodotus and Aeschylus in the original Greek, studying the Persian language and teaching astronomy to a Glass Town 'bluestocking'" (Alexander, Early Works 23-4), is associated with the historical queen Zenobia. She is the "Empress of Women," a "masculine soul encased in a

feminine casket" (EEW 2.2:280). She is also sexually aggressive and several times attempts to take Zamorna by storm, even "tramp[ing] up as far as the Duke's country palace" to accost him (EEW 1:303). After one of Zamorna's public orations, Zenobia is so fired by his rhetoric that she forgets all the rules of femininity. Finding him in the park where he has retreated from the crowd, she grasps his arm, fixes him with a "wild unnatural expression of countenance" and declares that his "eloquence" and "noble genius" have "driven [her] to desperation." She vows to kill herself on the spot if he does not agree to be her husband (EEW 1:347).

Because her own unruly passion and genius are insufficiently contained within the "casket of femininity," Zenobia earns the disdain of the masculine world. At Bravey's Inn, where the male elite of Verdopolis gather to drink and converse, an impromptu male court tries Zenobia and concludes that she is an anomalous creature out of her natural element. Zamorna (who has forgiven Zenobia her fit of "insanity") defends her by comparing her to a "magnificent swan" who will "glide down the tide of life, her white plumes gleaming with the radiance of an intellect that will leave a glorious and eternal light behind." However, the Duke of Wellington, Zamorna's father and Verdopolis's elder statesman, caps

Zamorna's swan analogy and reshapes it to the disadvantage of Zenobia and all women who presume to act outside the domestic sphere:

> Now, with your leave, I'll pursue the parallel; nay enlarge it, for I'll liken all womankind to the same bird. We all know that the proper and native element of swans is water, where no creature can equal them in dignity, gracefulness and majestic beauty. There, in short, they are unrivalled. But whenever they presume to set foot on land their unseemly waddle entitles every winged creature . . . to laugh till their sides split at the ludicrous spectacle. In like manner the proper and native element of woman is home. That is her kingdom and her undisputed and rightful possession. But when she foolishly wanders then and forces herself upon the public eye the swan's vagaries are but a type of those she exhibits. (EEW 1:313-14)

After hearing Wellington's authoritative pronouncement, others pipe up in support of his view. Colonel Grenville declares that he "would not like it" if he came home "tired and hungry" and "found [his] table heaped with books and papers instead of a good, hot smoking dinner" (EEW 1:314).

Because she aspires to more than the ritualized performance of female accomplishment, Zenobia forfeits resectability without gaining access to the sphere of masculine cultural power. In contrast to artists like DeLisle whose sublime art makes him famous, revered and rich, Zenobia is expected to retain her private, amateur status and to trim her abilities and propensities to suit the prevailing norms of feminine conduct. Her most public

achievements are the select and well-attended salons she holds for prominent artists, intellectuals and political figures. In these "dazzling circles" where she is "ever a distinguished ornament," Zenobia achieves, at best, a domesticated facsimile of the masculine cultural life from which she is excluded. On the stage of Verdopolitan culture, Zenobia must confine herself to the domestic theatre where her talents find their appropriately circumscribed milieu. Like Madame de Staël, her talents, however impressive, will always be superseded by the paramount faculty of male genius which will see her merely as an ornamental art object.

What constrains both Zenobia and Marian is the fact that they can never be more than beautiful objects to be put on display in the _camera_ of domesticity as a means of affirming the authority of a male aesthetic posture that sees its self-aggrandizing sublimity affirmed by the ornamental performance of an accomplished femininity. Unable to perform themselves outside the role which assigns to them the embodiment rather than the creation of art, Zenobia and Marian can only realize themselves within the "casket of femininity," where they must, perforce, inscribe their own disempowerment. As Zenobia's case suggests, to ignore these constraints, to perform outside the designated closets and chambers of female life is to

appear, at best, as a waddling swan, a laughable anomaly who has no place in the "nature" of things. At worst (as in the case of Bertha Rochester who is foreshadowed in Zenobia), such sexual outlawry appears as insanity. To exhibit the aggressive sexuality of a Zenobia or a Bertha is to affirm the unregulated female psyche as a space of hysterical embodiment which will breed a monstrous, illegitimate femininity that must be classed as alien and perverse.

While female characters like Marian and Zenobia dramatize the prohibitive constraints that trivialized and denigrated female culture, Brontë's male characters demonstrate her awareness of those aesthetic postures by means of which men affirmed their authority. Throughout her early work, we see men asserting their sublimity over against the circumscription of women; and it is through the discourse of the sublime that those male figures who represent the ruling elite of Verdopolitan society and culture most often affirm their ascendency. This strategy is evident in a passage in which Zamorna, who prides himself on his own genius (being a poet himself) describes the transcendent genius of the painter, DeLisle.[8]

> Who can conceive the thoughts and sensations of such a man, while from that aerial altitude he traced the grand lineaments of nature? None. How was he then raised above all sublunary concerns? How must his already gigantic spirit have dilated, as he saw the farthest isles and coasts drawn into the vast circle of an horizon, more

> extensive than that beheld from Chimorazo or Teneriffe? DeLisle, you are already among those consecrated names that form the boast and glory of Britannia, Empress of the Waves. (EEW 1:235)

Because he can recognize genius and can recreate the power of DeLisle's work through his own rhetoric, Zamorna may claim a share of genius as the sublime audience of a sublime work. Since DeLisle is present during Zamorna's laudatory speech, there is more than a hint here of mutual admiration designed to buttress the grandeur of masculine genius and to maintain an "aesthetics of domination" which confirms artist and ruler as sovereign aesthetic and political authorities.

Certainly Young Soult, a self-styled genius who, although he is not among the ruling elite, considers himself one of the chosen few whose whose genius takes them far beyond the reach of ordinary mortals into the regions of the sublime:

> The wings of poesy are ever expanded, and they often bear this unbending spirit by sudden involuntary flight afar into the wide realms of imagination, and there, for a while, I bask amid the shadows of unearthly groves or the lights of superhuman vales, utterly forgetful of all that belongs to this external workaday world, till some biped's voice calls me again to these darksome regions to converse among those I dwell within the body, not the mind. ("The Poetaster" EEW 1:190)

Here Soult's sublime exaltation of mind is set against the unsublimated, bodily existence of those who inhabit less exalted regions, a statement which is reminiscent of the

article in Blackwood's that sets the transcendent mind of male genius against the animal organization that confines female being to the "darksome regions" of unsublimated existence.

The most telling examples of the sublime as an "aesthetics of dominance," however, occur when the transcendent male finds his ascendence affirmed in the subservience of a female worshipper. In "Something About Arthur," for instance, Douro appears to his mistress, Mina Laury, as an exalted being whose sublimity is the sign of his ascendence over her.

> Yes, the proud, aristocratic, high-minded, refined, elegant marquis of Douro had actually fallen in love with a poor, low-born peasant's daughter and his affection was not unanswered. Mina indeed could not be said so much to love as to worship him. He appeared to her in the light of a superior being, as an angel, an archangel, and a species of awe filled her mind whenever she looked at him. (EEW 2.1:38)

Helplessly in awe of him, Mina engages in a humble (and humiliating) worship of her "master" that affirms both his transcendence and her abasement.

In a later story, "High Life in Verdopolis," the male posture of sublime ascendence is more consciously displayed when Duke Ellrington addresses Mary (Zamorna's second wife) in a self-aggrandizing speech meant to impress Mary with her own hopeless inferiority and subservience.

> Mary, you see in Zamorna and myself the perfection of created things. Man is the masterpiece of nature, or of him who commanded the existence of nature. We are formed both mentally and corporeally in the first mould of humanity. Look then, look earnestly, look long. No fairer, no nobler spectacle will ever be presented to your gaze. (EEW 2.2:32)

By asserting a divinely authorized transcendence, which Mary can only gaze at with awe, Ellrington assumes a sublime posture which emphatically affirms Mary's own incapacity for such transcendent self-representation.

It is this "overlooking" of female intellect by superior male intellect that Brontë ironically addresses in her story "Lily Hart," where she implies that the power of the sublime is to be experienced by women at second hand, through the exaltation experienced while observing the male mind in action.

> Then, in the evenings, when the curtains were let down and the fire burned bright, while the ladies sat at their needlework, Mr. Seymour would read to them from some standard author, commenting on remarkable passages as he went on and illustrating such as were obscure, in language so lucid, so unassuming, and at times so eloquent as to give them a most exalted idea of his understanding.(EEW 2.1:303-4)

Here Brontë describes the effect of a male intellect on a weak and impressible female audience. Snug in their domestic sphere, occupied with their "trivial" needlework, the ladies are rapt in wonder at a sublime mind that so far transcends their own limited intellectual capacities. In the enclosed space in which the circumscription of

their mental faculties is embedded, the best these women can hope for is to be enlightened and awed by a male mind displaying its superiority.

As is evident in these examples of female impotence, Brontë was fully aware of what was at stake for women in the gendered politics of cultural dominance,[9] an awareness that prompted her, in a devoir written in Brussels, to disguise her own claims to genius under the persona of a male narrator. Knowing that she was operating within the context of a cultural discourse that recognized genius as a sublime male faculty and female genius as an anomaly, Brontë obviously felt it advisable to keep the discussion of genius within male parameters, although, as Susan Lonoff notes, "it seems plain enough from what she has written" that "Charlotte was personally involved in her subject":

> Milord, I believe I have talent. Do not be indignant at my presumption or accuse me of conceit; I do not know that feeble feeling, the child of vanity; but I know well another feeling, Respect for myself, a feeling born of independence and integrity. Milord, I believe I have Genius.
>
> That declaration shocks you; you find it arrogant, I find it very simple. Doesn't everyone agree that no artist can succeed without genius? Then would it not be sheer imbecility to dedicate oneself to the arts without being sure one has the indispensable quality? But how to acquire that assurance? Can one not be mistaken about it? I know of only one sure method. One must live in the world, compare oneself with others, submit oneself to the test of experience. . . and if one emerges from it without being transmuted into the

> ordinary lead of society, it is because one's soul contains a few grains of that pure gold which is called Genius. (qtd. in Lonoff "On the Struggles of a Poor and Unknown Artist" 376)

Here Brontë, (who was herself engaged in the experiment of "living in the world" during her stay in Brussels) under the mask of the male artist, implies that she not only understands both the nature and the demands of genius, but possesses it. Yet, however convinced Brontë might have been of her own genius, her use of a male narrator suggests that she was also aware that she could not make bold assertions of her own gifts without risking the censure of a society that reduced women's desire for aesthetic excellence and authority to the promptings of hysteria--not genius.

The strategies Brontë developed to protest against the restrictions confining women to the domestic sphere of accomplishment were important considerations throughout her career. As I have indicated, this protest was taking shape even in her juvenilia, where Brontë honed her skills at debunking the absurdities of a debilitatingly gendered culture. Although the female characters in Brontë's juvenilia are not rescued from the exclusivity of a masculine Romanticism, the ideas of male sublimity and genius are often satirically interrogated as absurdly egotistical postures of misogynistic self-empowerment. What is often forgotten in discussions of Brontë's

juvenilia is its satiric character. Strongly influenced by the satirical tone of Blackwood's, and particularly by the parodic Noctes Ambrosiana with its strategy of multiple, ironizing voices, Brontë's early work retains, even at its most "Byronic," the ironizing framework of alternate, ego-deflating perspectives. If Douro/Zamorna appears as the epitome of the Romantic hero whose sublimity is in keeping with his paramount status as the nation's ruler, his authority is also frequently undermined by the reports of his cynical and jealous brother, Charles Wellesley (the voyeuristic, self-appointed chronicler of Verdopolitan society), who delights in exposing the weaknesses and inconsistencies of Verdopolis's ruling elite.[10] Openly unreliable, inconsistent and self-serving, Charles's narrations work against the hegemonic pretensions of the sublime ruling ego epitomized in Douro/Zamorna and his equally egotistical cohorts, such as Zamorna's arch-rival, Duke Ellrington.[11]

For Brontë, who was herself often tempted to laugh behind the solemn mask of female decorum, the juvenilia represented a private narrative that allowed her to register and satirize the injustices of an aesthetic regime that, while it expanded the parameters of the Lockean "closet" to include the subjective force of the

imagination, refused to accommodate an authoritatively creative female subject. In the context of a society and culture that valued the "sincerity" and "authenticity" of women, the recourse to irony and satire in exposing the structures of male culture was, of itself, a prohibited activity for females. This was a fact which Brontë herself acknowledged in her own postures vis-à-vis her relationships with men. When, for instance, she refused a proposal from Henry Nussey, "Ellen's dull brother," she "felt obliged to reveal" that the "grave image," she had enacted for him "was not her real character." If he saw her in her home character he would find her "eccentric, romantic, satirical" (Gordon 74). She realized that Henry desired an ideal wife with a character "not too marked, ardent and original" (Brontë qtd. in Gordon 75). As she later told Ellen Nussey in explanation of her refusal to marry him, "I could not sit all day making a grave face before my husband" (Brontë qtd. in Gordon 75). Thus, although she repudiated the mask of the dutiful, sincere and "grave" woman, Brontë acknowledged the necessity to appear in this guise, a doubled self-representation which Lyndall Gordon admirably summarizes:

> Throughout . . . her life, the ambivalence remained. Charlotte practised the manners of a well-bred lady--the modesty, the decorum, the reserve--and at the same time exploded the artifice of tameness. (83)

It was this "artifice of tameness" which excluded the use of satire from the repertoire of female performance. Because it relies on wit--that is to say, on perspicuity and quickness of mind--satire is identified as a masculine mode appropriate to the masculine "overseer" who has the scope to apprehend and then ironically comment on a subject. In the hands of a female, whose proper posture is blind obedience, such deployment of wit would be unbecoming, inappropriate and dangerous. This attitude is evident in a popular pamphlet concerning female character and deportment (A Father's Legacy to His Daughters) in which the author encourages women to preserve at all times "modest reserve" or "retiring delicacy." According to the same writer, to display "extreme sensibility" is "peculiarly engaging" in women whereas wit is "the most dangerous talent" (Björk 36-7). Particularly dangerous to the strategies of male self-empowerment, the capacity for wit and satire in a woman threatened the construction of females as "naturally" sincere, delicate and reserved creatures uncritically dependent upon masculine structures of selfhood. To exercise this "dangerous talent" was a prohibitive business for a woman writer who also wished to maintain her credibility as an "authentic" female.

Nevertheless, as Brontë's response to Henry Nussey suggests, humour was an important element of her character

and she did not let her talent for satire go undeveloped even though it was hedged about with such prohibitions. Satire was, in fact, a distinguishing characteristic of Brontë's juvenilia, a feature Mary Taylor recognized in her response to Jane Eyre. Here Taylor implies that Jane Eyre represents a falling-off of Brontë's satirical voice because it is too straight-faced and uncritical in its treatment of female life for Taylor's feminist tastes:

> You are very different from me in having no doctrine to preach. It is impossible to squeeze a moral out of your production. Has the world gone so well with you that you have no protest to make against its absurdities? Did you never sneer or declaim in your first sketches? I will scold you well when I see you (SHLL 2:236).

As Taylor suggests, Brontë's ability to "sneer" represented a subversive talent by means of which she could register her resistance to the "absurdities" of female life. In "The Green Dwarf," for instance, the posture of male transcendence is mocked in the stuffy outrage of Gifford, tutor of young Verdopolitan royalty, who complains about the incorrigibility of Lady Emily who refuses to have her mind "improved" under his guidance.

> I would have her cultivate the faculties with which Nature hath endowed her by diligent perusal of abridged treatises on the subjects you mention, carefully digested by some able and judicious man. I, myself have . . . composed a small work of ten quarto volumes on the antiquities of England interspersed with explanatory notes. . . . If I could have got her to read this little work carefully and attentively through, it might have given her some insight into the noble science of which I

> am an unworthy eulogist. But while by a strange perversion of intellect she listened openly and followed obediently, the instructions of the trivial beings who taught her the empty accomplishments of music, dancing, drawing, modern languages, etc., etc., while she even gave some occasional odd moments to the formation of flowers and other cunning devices on the borders of silken or fine linen raiment, I alone vainly attempted to lure her on in the honourable paths of wisdom, sometimes by honeyed words of enticement, sometimes by thorny threats of correction. At one time she laughed, at another wept, and occasionally (to my shame be it spoken) bribed me by delusive blandishments to criminal acquiescence in her shameful neglect of all that is profitable to be understood by either man or woman. (EEW 2.1:136-7)

Here Gifford trivializes Emily's typical female accomplishments by emphasizing his own superior wisdom and erudition. He professes a desire to initiate her into the mysteries of intellect, but intends to do so by dosing her with some "carefully digested" material. When she shows signs of spurning his dry-as-dust intellectual medicine, he condemns her as a femme fatale whose infectious, erotic lassitude lures him from the straight and narrow path of male wisdom. In this parodic treatment of professorial posturing, Brontë pokes fun at a male society that first marginalizes women by training them as desirable pets and then victimizes and blames them for the eroticized triviality that masculine culture demands to see in them.

While he condescendingly deplores the intellectual "perversion" that spurns predigested wisdom in favour of feminine accomplishment, Gifford also exalts the status of

his own intellect. For Emily, whose greatest ambition should be to absorb male learning at second hand in "abridged" form, intellectual endeavour must always be derivative and dependent upon the offices of more substantial and wide ranging male minds. Certainly, by mentioning his ten quarto volumes on English antiquity, Gifford wishes to represent his as the higher-ranking, non-derivative intellect that produces the treatises which are digested for female consumption. In presenting himself as a fount of authoritative scholarship, Gifford also registers a desire to appear as an originary intellect with the power and scope to shape and control the circumscribed, second-hand workings of the female mind--an undertaking that would certainly succeed were it not for Emily's "depraved" resistance to his well-meaning authority.

Gifford's dissertation on Emily's feminine perversity is thus meant to inscribe the unbridgeable gap between the authoritative cultural productions of the male mind and the derivative trivialities of a female mind which has not even enough wisdom to recognize "profitable" intellectual pursuits when they are offered. Throughout, he wishes to assert the strength and purpose of his own mind against the seductive, wandering lassitude of hers in a display of superiority that is meant to set off more absolutely the

limited, vacillating nature of Emily's female intellect. Gifford's strategy is one which reinscribes a position already well-entrenched in the sexual contestation of cultural discourse. His assumption of intellectual scope and authority over against Emily's trivial accomplishments and eroticized mental operations rests on denigrating distinctions implicit in constructions of genius and the sublime.

While the female characters of Brontë's juvenilia obviously operate within this restrictive cultural and aesthetic structure, their cultural performances are not inscribed without ironic resistance to these male-centred constructions of the female self. Because she has so often been cast as the sombre and sincere protagonist of her own exemplary life, it is not easy to see Brontë as an ironist and satirist whose wit challenged conventionalized modes of female performance. Yet passages such as Gifford's description of Emily's talents, display how effectively Brontë could satirize the framework in which the trivialization and containment of female artistry was embedded. Ironically revealing his own inadequate posture through his self-sublimating rhetoric, Gifford is revealed as a would-be savant who unwittingly displays the pretensions of the system in which he operates.

In these early works, Brontë develops the ironic manoeuvres by means of which she exposes the absurdities of a masculine culture which denies genius in women and requires them to perform as artistic objects--realizations of male power and desire rather than self-realized beings in their own right. In "High Life in Verdopolis," for instance, we see how Howard Warner, a rising bourgeois entrepreneur who is looking over the "goods" at a high-society marriage market, is confounded by the unladylike treatment he receives from one of his prospects. Wishing to select a wife from the upper echelons of society, Warner has been advised by his sister to go to the "grand party at Wellesley House" where "all the principle ladies in Verdopolis will be assembled" (EEW 2.2:7). After he has looked over some possible candidates, Howard sees Ellen Grenville, a "youthful blue[stocking]" and protegée of Zenobia. Although he is, at first, put off by Ellen's "manner of conversing" (which "evinced great knowledge and that too of the recondite order which we do not expect to find in ladies, more especially young ladies"), Warner forgets "all terror of learning" when he sees that the "whole spirit of her words and sentiments was so careless, unconscious, good-humoured, so divested of pretension and so filled with girlish simplicity . . . " (EEW 2.2:21). Believing that her learning is adequately mitigated by her

feminine charm, Warner approaches her with confidence. But Ellen does not behave with the feminine self-deprecation that Warner expects. When he is introduced, she speaks about him "not as if he had been a living man who could hear every word she uttered, but rather as if he were an unconscious picture or a statue." Unused to being treated like statuary (a role usually reserved for women), Howard does not know "what to make of this satirical mode of addressing him" and is thrown into confusion. In fact, just as Brontë turns the tables on her patronizing critics, Ellen turns the tables on Warner by gorgonizing him and denying him the satisfaction of perceiving her as one of the female items on display (EEW 2.2:22-3).

It is, however, in her use of the voyeuristic Charles Wellesley, her preferred narrator, that Brontë achieves some of her most interesting ironic effects. Although he is a male narrator, Brontë deploys Charles in a way that allows for the subversive emergence of female perspectives. A liminal figure himself, Charles often gains access to female spaces where he can witness and report on female self-performances that do not entirely conform to the idea of submissive womanhood. Through Charles, Brontë makes room for the appearance of a satirizing female presence who laughs, from within the

camera of her imprisoning enclosures, at the pretensions of tyrannically self-aggrandizing male culture.

By addressing the issue of female self-representation through the framework of this male narrator and observer, Brontë develops strategies for ironizing the context of his commentary and exposing the postures he assumes as well as the expectations and desires he projects upon the women he describes. Charles's engagements with Mary are particularly interesting as examples of this double exposure of Wellesley's self-interested manipulations and the subversive self-enactments of a woman who does not entirely conform to his construction of her. For instance, Wellesely's highly affected discourse on Mary's beauty is, like Zamorna's sublime description of DeLisle's painting and Young Soult's description of his sublime transport, a buttressing of his own rhetorical powers. Here he describes her moving like an angel among the rude peasantry of Verdopolis:

> She would descend from her carriage and advance unattended into a throng of bold and hardy peasantry, gliding through their stern rough ranks like a sunbeam, and answering their hoarse thunders of congratulation, that shook the very welkin, in tones so sweet, so soft, in words so prompt and appropriate and in a manner so totally unembarrassed, so queenly yet so feminine and gentle, that her rude auditors, unable to resist the charm of her speech and appearance, would frequently burst into simultaneous prayer for all the blessings of heaven above and of the deep that lie under to

> be showered on the lovely angel who was imparadised in such sweet flesh. (EEW 2.2:35)

The sheer banality which informs this clichéd passage should warn us that Brontë is satirizing a rhetorical tour de force that casts Mary as an eroticized angel whose charming performance serves as an occasion to display Wellesley's talents. It is not Mary we see here, but Wellesley's self-aggrandizing view of her.

Other incidents further suggest that the "angel imparadised in sweet flesh" is not so much the "real" Mary as a reflection of Wellesley's own voyeuristic desires. In one episode, Mary plays with Wellesley by inviting him into her "sanctum sanctorum" as if she were suggesting an illicit rendezvous. When he finds her "sitting at her glass in loose and graceful undress," he revels (like a would-be rake) in anticipation of the erotic pleasures she seems to be allowing him. But his assumption that his entry into her most intimate space will lead to sexual intimacy is exploded as soon as he catches the look on her face. " I am sorry to say that there was an expression about her beautiful mouth as if she were trying to suppress a laugh" (EEW 2.2:9-10). Instead of the compliant femininity he expects to embrace, he finds himself outmanoeuvred by a laughing female subject whose humour belies his posture of erotic conquest and suggests that,

perhaps, the "angel imparadised in sweet flesh" is a construction of his desire for voyeuristic ascendency.

This encroachment on the authority of a male narrator by a satirical female presence is repeated later when Wellesley, an unregenerate voyeur, follows the ladies who retire from the dinner table to the drawing room. In the sanctuary of this female retreat, the women indulge in the unfeminine delights of parody and satire:

> Even Mary, whose fine mind and exquisite delicacy of taste might, one would suppose, have induced her to reject such conversation as not sufficiently refined, kindled into interest while she listened and her bright hazel eyes absolutely gleamed with the light of satire as at one time, with a few sharply severe words, she herself touched off the character of Lady Sydney, glanced at the Princess Maria, and with the lightness and keenness of a frost wind in winter, even skimmed over the foibles of her present stepmother." (EEW 2.2:30)

Here Brontë, through the spying eyes of Wellesley, reveals the freedoms that women allow themselves in the privacy of the spaces where they are not under the codified strictures of the male gaze. In camera, women achieve a paradoxical liberty by preserving themselves unseen in the recesses of the female spaces they have been allotted by masculine culture. Although constrained by the paradigms that construct them, women still find the means to enact themselves as subjects capable of wit and judgement and laughter.

In the same narrative, Brontë also pokes fun at Romantic constructions of the self which continue to exclude women from the regions of empowered selfhood. In an exchange between Zamorna and Mary, for instance, the posture of the Byronic male is exposed as yet another means of preserving the space of masculine hegemony. Here Zamorna, who has joined Mary in the window-seat where she is sitting after the dinner party with Charles Wellesley, proceeds to establish his proprietary rights by ousting Wellesley (a persistent would-be seducer) from the seat where he "establishes his own sublime person" next to his wife. After appropriating and dominating the space she occupies, he is further set up in his sublime position by the exchange that follows. Mary, who performs in a manner appropriate to a suitably awed wife, sighs and tells Zamorna that she "fear[s] there will be nothing like [him] in heaven." Taking this as a compliment to his Byronic posture, Zamorna replies: "Dearest . . . if the angels that meet you after death are like me, be on your guard lest they should prove fallen angels." Zamorna, who insists he is "no inhabitant of heaven" is assuming a Byronic egocentricity that, in Romantic convention, is a potent means of masculine self-empowerment (EEW 2.2. 31).[12] It is Mary, the "angel imparadised in sweet flesh," who is cast in the role of a subservient, self-

denying purity that must stand in awe of the prideful power of her satanic lord, Zamorna.

But after witnessing Mary possessed by the demon of satire, we cannot be so sure that she is the sanctified being she seems in this exchange. In fact, the "frosty" keenness of her wit implies that the angelic Mary, like the seduced and seductive Mary, are merely postures assumed to satisfy the male need for an embodied and integrated female "self" which will reinscribe and amplify masculine power. The satirical female invasions of the male scopic field introduce an ironizing framework that subverts the strategies of male self aggrandizement. Such subversions expose the fact that the angelic integrity of the "male engendered" female is only a performance assumed by a metamorphosing selfhood that will not be caught within the self-structures imposed by male desire.

Commentators tend to see in Brontë's juvenilia a "progression" from her dependence on a male narrative voice to the authorial self-confidence indicated by her adoption of female narrators in Jane Eyre and Villette (see Christine Alexander,"The Authorial Voice," Early Works 225-33). However, the fact that the narrators of the juvenilia are predominantly male does not necessarily indicate a weak appropriation of male constructions of women. Even Brontë's male narrators contribute to the

exposure and deflation of the masculine power that shapes women as blind vehicles who cannot inhabit, except as projected images of the masculine mind, the space of the creative I/eye. The intrusions of an ironic female I/eye that emerges from concealment in Wellesley's stories, suggests that even a male narration invested in the disempowerment of women, can be undone by the subversions of the female self.

As her early work demonstrates, Brontë was always aware of the sexist underpinnings of aesthetic expression, and whoever insists on a naive collusion with a masculine Romantic egotism must overlook her consistent satirizing and parodying of a male regime that belittled women in order to maintain masculine cultural and intellectual sovereignty. While she does not use a female narrator until Jane Eyre and Villette, this is not an indication that her narratives are in collusion in the "aesthetics of domination" which she investigates. In shifting from the world of Angria to the more public-oriented text of The Professor, Brontë continues with the use of a male narrator; however, as in the juvenilia, the adoption of a masculine perspective, far from being collusive, is ironically investigative in its exposures of the strategies of masculine self-empowerment. Although female consciousness remains on the margins of The Professor, it

functions, as it does in the early work, as a subversive presence that operates from within the confines of female enclosure. Like the juvenilia, The Professor is an investigation of the "dynamics of male struggles for power" from the viewpoint of a male narrator;but it is a viewpoint that is interrogated and subverted, as are the sublime self-structures of Angria's masculine elite, by the disruptive intrusions of non-magisterial perspectives which emerge from the hidden, marginalized enclosures of female selfhood.

Chapter IV

Lockean Enclosures: Perception, Profession and Gender in The Professor

Typically considered an "awkward piece of prentice-work" and dismissed as an immature "abortive draft" of Brontë's later masterpiece, Villette, The Professor has been condemned as a "clumsy fictionalization of autobiographical concerns" (Glen 8, 12). Robert Martin finds Brontë's use of a male narrator particularly unfortunate since her "true strength" was to "carry out the detailed investigation of the female psyche . . . " (39). Yet, despite a disheartening series of rejections, Brontë defended The Professor as the legitimate work of a mature author, not the immature effort of an over-confident neophyte.[1] In the "Author's Preface" to The Professor, she insists that "no indulgence can be solicited for it on the plea of a first attempt" (3). Nevertheless, the novel was doomed to remain unpublished until after her death.[2] After The Professor's final rejection, she wrote to her publisher, George Smith, explaining her intention to make an end of her "hero" by burying him in a "cupboard by himself."

> "The Professor" has now had the honour of being rejected nine times by the "Tr--de." . . . . Few--I flatter myself--have earned an equal distinction, and of course my feelings towards it can only be parallelled by those of a doting parent towards an idiot child. Its merit--I

> plainly perceive--will never by owned by anybody but Mr. Williams[3] and me; very particular and unique must be our penetration, and I think highly of us both accordingly. . . .
>
> You kindly propose to take "The Professor" into custody. Ah--No! His modest merit shrinks at going alone and unbefriended to a spirited Publisher. . . . . No--I have put him by and locked him up--not indeed in my desk where I could not tolerate the monotony of his demure Quaker countenance, but in a cupboard by himself. (SHLL 3:206-7)

Although Brontë's reference to the distasteful "monotony" of Crimsworth's "demure Quakerish countenance" should preclude simplistic assumptions concerning her identification with her narrator, some critics have overlooked the ironies that Brontë employs to distance herself from Crimsworth. According to Martin, the "choice of Crimsworth as a narrator is a serious handicap" because Brontë is "unable to impart a believable virility to her masculine mouthpiece" (39). Like many commentators on Brontë's first-person narratives, Martin assumes that the autobiographical voice must emphasize "a single aspect of perception" (28). Consequently, "When the credibility of the central consciousness is open to question, as it is with Crimsworth, the reader is unable to accept the validity of his perceptions" (39). In Martin's judgement, Brontë's "masculine mouthpiece," far from possessing an unimpeachable "central consciousness," is contaminated by perceptual ambiguities that fatally affect the integrity of his "virility." Martin certainly sees the

epistemological instability of Brontë's narrator as a sign of her failure to efface the stagecraft of her text. In his opinion, The Professor does not achieve the illusory transparency which keeps faith with the belief that words should act as apertures through which we may perceive and experience a reality that is, paradoxically, independent of the materials and conventions of representation.

However, the fact that Brontë's narrator does not possess a "strong central consciousness" should not necessarily condemn the novel as an inept attempt to represent the masculine psyche. According to Martin, Brontë did "not intend the awareness of the narrator to be different from that of herself or of the reader" (39); but Brontë's parodic entombment of her manuscript indicates that she did, indeed, wish to demonstrate that her narrative persona, far from replicating the awareness of author and reader, is a complex representation that can only be accepted as a "simple" entity by those who are blinded by their investment in the very "certainties" that her text is designed to subvert.

In The Professor, Brontë creates a doubly-framed narrative where Crimsworth's masked erasures make marginal but telling appearances that, despite his most plausible professions, undermine the narratorial authority he claims by virtue of his Lockean alignments. As narrator and

protagonist, Crimsworth is a would-be rationalist whose self-enclosures are designed, like Locke's camera, to police the subject/object boundary so that the authority of the self can be maintained against the threatening encroachments of the other. Because of the irony generated by his increasingly evident blind spots and erasures, he fails to maintain the integrity of his performance as a magisterial male subject whose narratorial control is expressed through the relentless objectification of the female subject. As his narrative progresses, Crimsworth's postures gradually reveal themselves as the self-defensive strategies of a radically unstable subject attempting to simulate the monolithic stability that is the hallmark of the rationalized, masculine self. Just as the psychic spaces defined by his cognitive/perceptual postures are invaded by non-rational motives and impulses, the spaces he inhabits, which he wishes to invest with the authority of the Lockean observer, are subverted by the presence of enclosures where the mutability of the female self is inscribed. Unable to maintain the magisterial comprehension that his self-narration is meant to achieve, Crimsworth's story finally succumbs to a catastrophic closure that signals his inability to authorize his masculine self. What is revealed in Crimsworth's failure to achieve authority is

the spuriousness of the monolithic male narrator he wishes to construct. Failing the policed stability of Lockean self-construction, we are left with the paradox of a subject whose posture invalidates the very strategies on which his subjective authority is based.

As Brontë's closeting of her manuscript implies, the epistemological and aesthetic space that defines the novel as a whole and constitutes the setting of Crimsworth's own "self-performance" is enclosure. This trope, however, is a space of multivalence where the Lockean camera does not function as a totalizing model of cognition and perception but is itself ironically contextualized. Embedded in the aporic "space" of theatre, the camera's regulated and regulatory distinctions between self and other, subject and object, fiction and reality can be re-presented as characteristic of a performance that must efface its fictiveness. It is this theatricalization of the Lockean camera that accommodates the ironic contextualization of Crimsworth's self-presentation and accounts for the objectionable incongruities in his narratorial performance. The fact that his narrative is not seamlessly persuasive foregrounds the performative nature of his self-representation. These gaps in Crimsworth's story betray him as a poseur whose appropriation of the Lockean eye/I is a performance intended to authorize him

as a rational observer whose perceptions and representations carry the guarantee of epistemological integrity.

Crimsworth's perspectives in The Professor are informed by the idea of the Lockean mind in camera. Abounding in enclosures and framed perspectives, The Professor expresses its narrator's desire for scopic control. The windows, enclosures and rationalized perspectives through which Crimsworth organizes the world he inhabits are means of appropriating the authoritative position of the Lockean observer. His reliance on Lockean paradigms which appears most tellingly in the construction of his own mind as a gallery of painted memory images (see my discussion below) extends to other, related strategies of containment. For instance, his wish to imprison the transient images of memory in "urns" and "niches" is an extension of the static enclosure of the Lockean camera which also fixes and contains the transient impressions of perceptual experience. His defensive postures of self-containment, designed to deflect penetrative observation, are Lockean, too, in their Panoptic strategy of maintaining the authority and control of the unseen observer.

Crimsworth is especially interested in protecting himself against the subversion of his narrative by

perspectives which threaten to disempower his own. His attempts to invalidate the authority of his brother Edward, and his defensive attempts to deflect the ambiguous power of Hunsden, are structured within a dynamics of enclosure that gestures back towards the regulatory containment of the Lockean camera. Similarly, his "framing" strategies--especially the framing of women and images of women--are designed to construct female subjects as disempowered objects within the magisterial field of his derogatory regard. Constructing himself as a connoisseurial observer whose aesthetic posture works in tandem with his Lockean posture, Crimsworth emerges as a besieged Lockean whose aesthetic and epistemological strategies fail to resist the subversive intrusions he wishes to control.

Penny Boumelha rightly identifies the androgynous Hunsden as "an unusually visible plot manipulator"(45), but Hunsden's overt resistances to Crimsworth's authority are ultimately less compelling than the cumulative subversions of the female characters in Crimsworth's narratives, particularly those of Frances Henri who, in her resistance to Crimsworth's narrative control, anticipates the female rebellion of Jane Eyre. While Crimsworth attempts to construct her as the female helpmeet who will complement his posture as a magisterial

male, Frances gradually emerges as a disturbingly ambiguous character whose metamorphic fluidity resists Crimsworth's strategies of containment. Ostensibly contained by the masculine perspectives which frame them, Mdlle. Reuter, Crimsworth's female students and, most importantly, Frances Henri, gradually appear as subversive subjects whose seeming objectification is revealed as an attempt, on Crimsworth's part, to naturalize his masculine sovereignty. As Crimsworth's story proceeds, the seeming cohesion of his masculine persona is increasingly undermined by failed effacements that admit the ambiguities and metamorphoses of a female subject who, despite Crimsworth's narratorial control, manages to subvert the masculine sovereignty he so desperately wishes to maintain.

When Crimsworth performs himself, he also performs the negotiation of gender that the masculine posture of cognitive mastery entails. For Crimsworth, it is the posture of the _connoisseur_ that most completely embraces the authority of the masculine subject. As Bermingham explains, the _connoisseur_'s knowledge encompassed aesthetics and rationalist metaphysics, both of which became the exclusive territory of masculine self representation.

> [T]he connoisseur used empirical judgement based on visual evidence in order to classify the objects he collected. The connoisseur trained

> his eye so that he could authenticate and judge works of art on the basis of a visual taxonomy of stylistic attributes. . . . . [I]n addition to [an] appreciation of the mechanical and the technical side of art, the connoisseur unlike the artist was expected to have a complete grasp of art's philosophical character. This demanded a familiarity with all of culture, that is to say with history, philosophy, rhetoric, religion, and classical literature and languages. . . . . It almost goes without saying that the grand intellectual over-view of the connoisseur could not be shared by women who were not suited by nature to reason abstractly and thus comprehend broad philosophical arguments. (14)

To be a male in good standing, Crimsworth is obliged to adopt the posture of the disinterested observer who masters his scopic field by deploying those aesthetic and philosophic conventions that will support his _connoisseurial_ authority.

The enclosures that Crimsworth relies on to support his magisterial role are designed to appear as spaces that represent most powerfully the totalizing frame of his _connoisseurial_ gaze. In his opening letter to an old schoolfriend, Charles, Crimsworth is at pains to associate himself with the authority of the _connoisseur_. He calls Charles a "sarcastic, observant, shrewd, cold-blooded creature . . . " (5). Although he implies that he shares the same, superciliously objective view of their "companions" and "masters," Crimsworth considers himself superior to Charles because he also possesses the _connoisseur_'s love of "excellent or beautiful object[s],

whether in animate or inanimate nature." Anxious to discount Charles' "sardonic coldness" towards his connoisseurial ambitions, Crimsworth insists (with emphasis) that he feels "superior to that check *then* as I do *now*" (6). The comment is not surprising when we realize that his aesthetic "sensibility" is often a useful face-saver. When he is expected to take up a career in the Church and to marry one of his female cousins as an entailment of his spiritual career, Crimsworth poses as a man who is too discerning to condemn himself to marriage with tawdry females whose coarse fleshiness would unfit him for a spiritual life.

> No doubt they are accomplished and pretty; but not an accomplishment, not a charm of theirs, touches a chord in my bosom. To think of passing the winter evenings . . . with . . . the large and well-modelled statue, Sarah--no; I should be a bad husband, under such circumstances as well as a bad clergyman. (6)

Here Crimsworth's rationalized self-representation is intimately connected with his aesthetic construction of the women he encounters. When he "looks over" the girls who have been displayed as possible candidates for marriage, he judges and dismisses them as objects unworthy of his *connoisseurial* regard. Sarah, with her full-fleshed prettiness, becomes a "statue" whose aesthetic value is debased by her role as an accomplished female confined to a performance of subjectivity that frames her

as an inert, sexualized object.

Crimsworth employs a similar strategy when he meets the wife of his older brother, Edward, who has inherited their father's lucrative commercial "concern." Although he has decided to go into trade against his patrons' wishes, he attempts to subvert his brother's material success by framing Edward's wife within the magisterially distanced field of his _connoisseurial_ perception. Just as he constructs Sarah and her sisters as mere objects whose materiality disqualifies them for any more elevated level of cognizance, he responds to Mrs. Crimsworth as a male _connoisseur_ of female beauty and accomplishment. After giving her the "once over" during the course of dinner, he finds that she is "young, tall and well-shaped." She has "a good complexion," and "good animal spirits" (13). But, because she obviously prefers the regard of her husband, Crimsworth's construction of her as a potentially willing object of his gaze is exposed as a self-defensive posture. To recoup his status as the scene's authoritative character, like the fox who could not reach the grapes, he is obliged to demean the female "goods" he cannot possess. He "saw vivacity, vanity--coquetry" but "watched in vain for a trace of soul" and saw "no clear, cheering gleam of intellect" (13). Here Crimsworth abruptly reverses his first perception of her in an attempt to reassert his

superiority over the couple by dismissing his brother's wife as an object without aesthetic, intellectual or sexual value.

Although he also applies his derogatory strategies to the males in his narrative, Crimsworth tends to attack his masculine competitors on a more intellectual level. For instance, to make Edward appear as the complete businessman whose intellect, like his wife's sexuality, is cast in the mould of materialism, Crimsworth calls on an attitudinizing designed to display his own capacity for rational observation and introspection--the hallmarks of the intellectually superior male. When he first greets Edward, he struggles to repress a "tremor" in his hand that would have betrayed a shaming eagerness to be accepted by his
brother (10).

Like his narratorial constructions and reconstructions of Charles, Sarah and Mrs. Crimsworth, which are designed to maintain or reassert his authoritative posture of detachment, Crimsworth attempts to deal with Edward's cool mastery and physical superiority by asserting his own, superior taste and intellect: "As an animal, Edward excelled me far--should he prove as paramount in mind as in person I must be his slave. . . . Had I then the force of mind to cope with

him?" (16). Professing to take a perfectly rational approach to the situation, Crimsworth attempts to reassert his authority by assuming the reflective posture of an observer <u>in camera</u> whose paramount faculty of reason is brought to bear on the products of perception. When he claims to be absorbed by an "inward speculation on the differences which exist in the constitution of men's minds" (12), he implies, of course, that his own mind possesses a reasoning faculty that makes it far superior to the aggressive materialism of Edward's mind, concerned with nothing but brute facts. Similarly, after he refuses to reply to one of Edward's questions, Crimsworth affects to wonder whether Edward considers his silence "a symptom of contumacy or evidence of . . . being cowed by his [Edward's] peremptory manner," as if the question were entirely a matter of intellectual speculation (12). This self-defensive tendency to "cut" the figures who threaten or reject him is rationalized as a philosophical stance whereby he reconstructs himself as the man of fine discernment whose sensitive nature will not brook the inclusion of the second-rate: "Once convinced that my friend's disposition is incompatible with my own, once assured that he is indelibly stained with certain defects obnoxious to my principles and I dissolve the connection. I did so with Edward . . . . " (113). As these shifts in

Crimsworth's self-performances accumulate, we become increasingly aware that his posturing derives from a masked insecurity, not from the totalizing metaphysics to which he lays claim.

Crimsworth's investment in the posture of the rationalist/connoisseur is even more apparent in the description of his mind as Lockean closet containing a collection of paintings that record, in temporal sequence, the images of his past perceptions:

> Three--nay four pictures line the four-walled cell where are stored for me the Records of the Past. First, Eton. All in that picture is in far perspective, receding, diminutive; but freshly coloured, green, dewy; with a spring sky piled with glittering yet showery clouds--for my childhood was not all sunshine--it had its overcast, its cold, its stormy hours. Second, X--; huge, dingy; the canvass cracked and smoked; a yellow sky sooty clouds; no sun, no azure; the verdure of the suburbs blighted and sullied--a very dreary scene.
>
> Third--Belgium; and I will pause before this landscape. As to the fourth, a curtain covers it . . . . (55)

Although, as I note below, this construction departs in significant ways from the Lockean architecture of the mind, Crimsworth's description of this orderly arrangement of memory-paintings is close enough to Locke's to create the impression that the paintings on the walls of his "cell" are as rationally disposed as the images in Locke's camera where "Pictures" come into a "dark room" and "lie so orderly as to be found upon occasion" (Essay II.11.17).

Moreover, he makes a point of imprinting images he wishes to keep in the storehouse of memory: "I desired Memory to take a clear and permanent impression of the scene and treasure it for future years" (46).

As well as appropriating such Lockean models of mind, Crimsworth employs aesthetic postures that will support his claim to perceptual and cognitive mastery. His description of the landscape in his description of the view from his brother's estate, for instance, is an attempt to display a _connoisseurial_ familiarity with the aesthetic conventions of the picturesque, while confirming his command of the rationalized perspective on which the authority of his viewpoint is based.

> The autumn sun, rising over the --shire hills, disclosed a pleasant country: woods brown and mellow varied the fields from which the harvest had been lately carried; a river gliding between the woods, caught on its surface the somewhat cold gleam of the October sun and sky; at frequent intervals along the banks of the river, tall cylindrical chimneys . . . indicated the factories which the trees half concealed; here and there mansions, similar to Crimsworth Hall, occupied agreeable sites on the hillside. . . . At a distance of five miles, a valley, opening between the low hills, held in its cup the great town of X--. (15)

Framed by the margins of his gaze, Crimsworth's "word painting" mimics the orderly construction of a painting done in rationalized perspective, with a foreground, middle-ground and background all converging on a central vanishing point. Like the image in the _camera obscura_,

Crimsworth's scene is the analogue of the Lockean eye that contains and regulates the objects of its gaze. As if to prove that such a rational eye (particularly his own) can provide accurate and stable evidence of the external world, Crimsworth states the exact distance between his position and the vanishing point of X--. By means of such rationalization, Crimsworth structures himself as a *connoisseur* whose panoramic gaze affirms the masterful subjectivity that differentiates him from the passive objectivity of all that is encompassed by his eye.

Crimsworth's aesthetic and epistemological appropriations, however, do not stop at the boundaries of such representational conventions. His description of St. Paul's Cathedral contains all the trappings of an observer who has been initiated into the divine workings of the sublime. After freeing himself from the materialistic confines of Edward's "concern," Crimsworth goes to London where he sees the dome of St. Paul's, an architectural emblem of the sublime. Gazing from the window of his small, dark room, he sees the Dome "looming through a London mist" and hears the "colossal phlegm and force of its bell" (57). Here, in sublime style, Crimsworth emphasizes the obscurity of the object he is attempting to see and further amplifies the ineffable experience by registering the "colossal" force of the tolling bell. Thus

Crimsworth asserts his alliance with the conventions of the sublime, which grant authority to an inspired I/eye that defies the brute hostility and confinement of the external world by affirming the absolute superiority of the perceiving self. By manoeuvring between the rationally regulated subject of Locke's camera and a sublime egotism that fuses self and other to the advantage of the creative self, Crimsworth struggles to substantiate an immutable subjectivity that will guarantee his transcendence.

That Brontë was aware of the ironies inherent in Crimsworth's position is evident in her Preface to the novel where she describes the paradoxical requirements of businessmen whose professed demands are belied by conflicting desires. Ostensibly bowing to the superior cognitive and scopic powers of masculine authority, Brontë sets out to expose the "feminine" weaknesses that the performance of masculinity is designed to mask. She declares that she "had got over any taste for ornamented and redundant composition, and come to prefer what was plain and homely." Therefore, she had set out to write an unembellished novel about a "real living" man "working his way through life." Yet the men of business, the publishers who seemingly required an uncompromising realism, "scarcely approved of this system" and would have liked "something more imaginative and poetical--something

more consonant with a highly wrought fancy, with a taste for pathos, with sentiments more tender, elevated and unworldly." "Indeed," she says,

> until an author has tried to dispose of a manuscript of this kind, he can never know what stores of romance and sensibility lie hidden in breasts he would not have suspected of casketing such treasure. . . . . [A] passionate preference for the wild, wonderful, and thrilling . . . agitates divers souls that show a calm and sober surface" (The Professor 3-4).

What Brontë is suggesting, of course, is that the posture of the businessman is just a surface, a cloaking enclosure designed to maintain the advantage of inscrutability while obscuring the illicit, "feminine" desires that underlie the conventional mask of the "calm and sober" power broker.

Even more telling is an unpublished draft of a preface that casts Crimsworth as a narrator who is not the man he professes to be.

> I had the pleasure of knowing Mr Crimsworth very well--and can vouch for his having been a respectable man--though perhaps not altogether the character he seems to have thought he was. Or rather--to an impartial eye--in the midst of his good points little defects and peculiarities were visible of which he was himself excusably unconscious--An air--a tone of his former profession lingered over & round him--a touch of the pedagogue, unobtrusive but also unmistakable--Besides his household [sic] thought him infallible and this naturally inclined other people to look out for failings--which as he was human and erring--of course they found. (The Professor Appendix III 295)

To the "impartial eye" of an "outside observer," it is

obvious that Crimsworth's God-like infallibility depends on his inability to see his own defects, a blindness that is abetted by the unquestioning adoration of a domestic circle who are equally blind to his faults. Under the gaze of a "disinterested" outsider,however, Crimsworth cannot retain the Albertian authority of the rational viewer; nor can he claim the scopic control that requires total possession of the field of vision and knowledge. Contextualized by an audience that brackets him within a wider field of knowledge and perception, Crimsworth's strategic blindnesses are revealed as suppressed flaws in his performance of mastery.

One of the few critics to see The Professor as an ironic work designed to frame its narrator's shortcomings, Annette Tromly aptly describes Crimsworth's blindness as a "pentimento," employing a "painter's term for the sign of a change of mind or concealed mistake . . . " (Oxford Companion to Art 826). It is the "concealed mistakes" or hidden "changes of mind" that allow us to see the telling disjunctions in Crimsworth's self-representation. Whereas Crimsworth intends to convince us, often through aesthetic and metaphysical allusions, that his story is a mimetic reproduction of his experiences, the blindnesses in his narrative belie his representational objectivity. These blindnesses mark those areas of erasure where his shifts

in epistemological and aesthetic ground identify him as a performer whose varying postures are self-defensive enactments of masculinity. He accomplishes this, not by a commitment to truth, but by a program of self-construction that makes use of aesthetic and philosophic systems to naturalize a posture of authority that masks a conflicted and equivocal being. Tromly provides a striking description (reminiscent of the magic lantern) of the effect that Crimsworth's pentimento has on the narrative as a whole.

> . . . William Crimsworth remains oblivious to the pentimento which complicates his literary self-portraiture. The personal myth he constructs seems to the reader to be superimposed upon a life which is far less tidy than Crimsworth himself will acknowledge. . . . In the portraits of the other main characters in the novel--Hunsden, Zoraïde Reuter, and Frances--the pentimento is equally pronounced and equally indistinct. We are presented with their images as seen through the eyes of Crimsworth; yet the shadows of images that Crimsworth does not see flicker always before us. (30)

However, while he attempts to manipulate his audience, Crimsworth's narrative purpose is foiled by his own opacities and ignorances. Although these pentimenti are meant to collude with a magisterial control of knowledge, they actually occlude the narrative transparency that is the trademark of the Lockean I/eye and reveal the irrationalities of desire that motivate the rational posture of the "powerful" male. What looks like

rational mastery is, in effect, a self-serving vision of the world. By accepting Crimsworth's Lockean posture as a conflicted performance driven by the desire for authority and the need to protect and aggrandize a vulnerable, masculine self, the reader can understand Crimsworth's *pentimento* as an area of obscured differentiation where the heretical other reveals breaches in his self-construction. Moreover, by deploying Lockean epistemology as a posture designed to efface his shortcomings, Crimsworth implies that Locke's theory of mind is itself vulnerable to the duplicity of a narrator who, rather than reasoning in good faith, rationalizes what are primarily self-interested motives. Crimsworth's labyrinthine system of containments is deployed to suppress the same emotional and bodily impulses that Locke excludes from the cerebral optics of his *camera*.

Because it is a word associated with equivocation and pretence, the very fact that Crimsworth has been designated a "professor" should warn us that his narrative must be regarded with suspicion. Although a "professor" originally meant one whose professions bear witness to genuine religious feeling, it ironically came to mean the very opposite: one whose professions indicate a self-interested evasion of truth and duty, as an exchange in Scott's *Woodstock* indicates:

> "I profess, I thought I was doing you

> pleasure . . . ."
> "O, ay! . . . Profess--profess. Ay, that is the new phrase of asseveration instead of the profane adjurations of courtiers and Cavaliers. Oh, sir, profess less and practice more." (The OED)

In keeping with this ambivalence, the word "professor" may indicate a high-ranking, honoured teacher or it may be used to denote a charlatan who dupes others by professing to have knowledge and skills that are either nonexistent or spurious (see The OED). Certainly Crimsworth's subsequent professorial posture in relation to his young Belgian students suggests that he relies more on the charade than on the substance of professorial authority:

> "Écoutez, Messieurs!" said I, and I endeavoured to throw into my accents the compassionate tone of a superior being, who, touched by the extremity of the helplessness, which at first only excited his scorn, deigns at length to bestow aid. (64)[4]

Given Crimsworth's enjoyment of the posture of professorship, it would be simplistic to approach The Professor without a due respect for its possible ironies. Brontë, who admired Scott and was herself adept at the construction of ironic postures, would not use the term loosely, nor would she fail to appreciate and exploit its ambiguities. We should therefore be wary of Crimsworth's invocations of theories of knowledge and aesthetics that are meant to convey his unimpeachable centrality and integrity. What his tale tacitly tells is the cost of

maintaining this ostensibly stable, central self in the face of a threatening relativism that defies the epistemological and aesthetic guarantees with which he attempts to enforce his authority. By staging his self-performance *in camera*, Crimsworth hopes to appropriate the protective enclosure of the Lockean subject who is safely differentiated from alterity by the regulative aperture of the rational eye.

Crimsworth perceives himself as a rational observer whose position *in camera* allows him to shape and regulate his scopic field. But this desire for immutable form is a sign of the rationalist's irrational overinvestment in reductive systematization. In Crimsworth's case, such reductivism results in rigid encapsulations that, although they are meant to emphasize the totalizing power of his consciousness, ironically qualify his posture of control. This rigidity is evident after his vision of the Dome when he returns to his small, dark room and experiences a desire to monumentalize his "sublime" experience. Like a good Lockean, he wishes to "impress" the moment of transcendence as an immutable image in the cognitive enclosure of his mind. While he professes to admire the ineffability of the Dome and ostensibly celebrates the ephemeral experience of sublimity, he is, in fact, attempting to master the sublime moment by "sealing" it

within the comprehensible limits that the Lockean *camera* provides. Instead of accepting the incomprehensibility that characterizes sublime experience, he wishes to "treasure" his memories, to "seal them in urns and keep them in safe niches" (57-8).

Crimsworth's description of the third "picture" in his gallery of memory images is also a scene that re-enacts the tomblike enclosure of his mind.

> Belgium! name unromantic and unpoetic . . . . It stirs my world of the Past, like a summons to Resurrection; the graves unclosed, the dead are raised; Thoughts, Feelings, Memories that slept, are seen by me ascending from the clods . . . but while I gaze on their vapour forms and strive to ascertain definitely their outline, the sound which wakened them dies and they sink, each and all, like alight wreath of mist, absorbed in the mould, recalled to urns, resealed in monuments. (55)

Here the "unromantic and unpoetic" word "Belgium" conjures up elusive, "luminous phantoms" that die in the very process of memorialization. Like the sublime experience of The Dome that he wishes to perpetuate, Crimsworth's memories of Belgium are contained only at the cost of their reburial. By objectifying even the inner images of memory, he reveals that his intense desire for immutability defines, not only the objects of his perception, but also the Lockean space of his mind where the "phantom" images of memory are held as dead objects "casketed" in their memorial enclosures.

Rather than admit the chaotic flux of existence, Crimsworth resists the temporal and the irrational by constructing his life as a perpetual and stable selfhood. As the reiteration of the emphasized phrase "then as now" in the passage above attests, he wished to construct a self impervious to change. Just as his symbolic immutability indicates a fear of temporality, his visualization argues an underlying vulnerability that drives him to an irrational, self-protective intensification of the self-containment implicit in Locke's camera. Crimsworth's containments are indicative of a malignant stasis that pervades his narrative. His constant efforts to frame the ineffable within the comprehensible betray his morbid preference for tomblike containment over the transient complexity of life.

The penitential "blinkering" of Crimsworth's own vision when he first arrives in Brussels is another example of an excessively regulated perception that reflects the obsessive reductiveness of his "rational" regulations:

> I never take pleasure before business, it is not in my nature to do so; impossible to enjoy a leisurely walk over the city, though I perceived the morning was very fine, until I had first presented Mr. Hunsden's letter of introduction and got fairly on to the track of a new situation. Wrenching my mind from Liberty and delight, I seized my hat, and forced my reluctant body out of the Hotel de-- into the foreign street.
>
> It was a fine day but I would not look at the blue sky nor at the at the stately houses round me; my mind was bent on one thing, finding out

> "Mr. Brown--Numéro--Rue Royale," for so my letter was addressed. (59)

In this self-inflicted moment of tunnel vision, Crimsworth betrays the desperately self-protective nature of the pentimento, the self-concealing "blind" of denial that marks the presence of the hidden desires that motivate his narratorial vision.

Crimsworth's blinkered vision also extends to his construction of women, particularly his Belgian students. Although he similarly objectifies the brutish boys at the Athenée where he finds a teaching position, his descriptions of the female students at Mdlle. Reuter's Academy are remarkably disdainful reflections of his reductive, objectifying vision of the "foreign" female. Despite his claim that he could not marry a "statue," he displays a disturbing tendency to gorgonize what he visualizes in order to affirm the masterful immutability of his self-construction. Certainly the "full-length portraits" of his female students indicate Crimsworth's penchant for categorizing and gorgonizing females in particular. These malevolent portraits, based on a physiognomy that shapes the "genus jeune fille" as a series of static emblems, are presented as immutable images of immutably debased intellects that can only reflect the authority of the Godlike genius that frames them. It is interesting, in this regard, that M. Pelet

suggests to Crimsworth that the girls (much like possible victims of a particularly aesthetic Blackbeard) would make "heads for artists" (95). Crimsworth, drawing on the static analogies of physiognomy, then goes on to present his "portraits" as if each female image was stamped with the signs of an inevitable degradation. He summarizes the "mass of them" as "mentally depraved" and then goes on to particulars, such as "Aurelia Koslow," a "half-breed between German and Russian" who has "very diminutive and vindictive grey eyes" (98). From Aurelia he moves on to Adèle Dronsart, "an unnatural-looking being, so young, so fresh, blooming, yet so Gorgon-like. Suspicion, sullen ill-temper were on her forehead, vicious propensities in her eye, envy and panther-like deceit about her mouth" (100). He wonders of Juanna Trista "that any one looking at that girl's head and countenance, would have received her under their roof. She had precisely the same shape of skull as Pope Alexander the sixth" (100). The nun-like Sylvie, although she is "the least exceptionable of his students," is a "pale, blighted image where life lingered feebly but whence the soul had been conjured by Romish wizard-craft!" (101). When the "sustained swinish tumult" of the classroom becomes intolerable, Crimsworth, in a final gesture of control, delivers the coup de grâce by locking the ringleader in a closet and pocketing the key

(102).

Another incidence of his self-empowering framing of women occurs when, in a catoptric moment, Crimsworth examines a portrait of his mother and comments on the gratification men feel when they see their visages reflected in the female form.

> . . . I gazed long and earnestly; my heart grew to the image. My Mother, I perceived, had bequeathed to me much of her features and countenance--her forehead, her eyes, her complexion; no regular beauty pleases egotistical human beings so much as a softened and refined likeness of themselves; for this reason, fathers regard with complacency the lineaments of their daughters' faces, where frequently their own similitude is found flatteringly associated with softness of hue and delicacy of outline.(24)

Like the self-aggrandizing reflections provided by his portraits of the "genus jeune fille," his mother's portrait is translated into an image designed to reflect the masculine gaze that frames her.

As Crimsworth's strategies of containment are progressively foregrounded, it becomes apparent that his desire for stasis is meant to shore up his selfhood against forces that threaten to breach the stable distinctions he attempts to enforce. For instance, the images Crimsworth contains in the "gallery" of his mind also reflect metamorphoses that disturb the rational orderliness of his mental images. What was once a "clear and permanent impression" of X-- is now a "dingy,"

disintegrating canvas. The painting of Eton, which is represented "in far perspective, receding diminutive" (55) is a scene that, for all its freshness, seems to be slipping out of his perceptual grasp. The third, Belgian "landscape," composed of memories briefly resurrected, is not so much a pictorial representation of memory images as an emblematic expression of a morbid mind that must entomb or imprison itself in order to affirm the threatened boundaries of selfhood. Significantly, the fourth and final picture of his mind's "cell" is not described at all. In his construction of this "image" as a curtained scene (55) that, depending on his whim, may or may not be resurrected, Crimsworth reveals the wilful stage-management of his narrative rather than the clarity and orderliness of his perceptions. In "curtaining" the last scene, he creates an opacity that belies the objective and truth-invested "transparency" of his Lockean eye. By such displays of iconic disintegration and narratorial will, Crimsworth subverts his posture of rational mastery and betrays the self-interested nature of perceptions which he wishes to present as epistemological certainties. In place of the disinterested observation of the connoisseur and the orderly images of the Lockean closet, Crimsworth introduces areas of ambiguous resistance that subvert the narratorial authority he hopes to achieve.

The wilful self-assertions that undermine his cognitive authority appear as self-interested erasures directed at those areas where he is most vulnerable. For instance, Crimsworth's first description of Hunsden, whom he refuses describe in full, can be seen as a ploy to present Hunsden as beneath his notice:

> . . . [I]t was all I myself saw of him at the moment; I did not investigate the colour of his eye-brows, nor of his eyes either--I saw his stature and the outline of his shape, I saw too, his fastidious-looking retroussé nose; these observations few in number, and general in character (the last excepted) sufficed, for they enabled me to recognize him. (24)

Whereas he controls his female students by framing them within the parameters of his derogatory portraiture, Crimsworth's strategy with Hunsden is to keep him in "silhouette," as if a too-complete realization of Hunsden might compete with his own defensive self-constructions. By providing only the barest outlines of Hunsden's features, Crimsworth creates the impression that Hunsden is a mere shadow on the margins of his own magisterial perception.

In fact, Hunsden does fulfil Crimsworth's fears by subverting Crimsworth's self-interested appropriation of his mother's portrait. Hunsden rudely undermines Crimsworth's self-aggrandizing interpretation of his mother's features with the statement that he does not "admire a head of that sort--it wants character and force;

there's too much of the sen-si-tive . . . in that mouth, besides there is Aristocrat written on the brow and defined in the figure" (25-6). When Crimsworth asks--probably with some hope of having his own aristocracy physiognomically confirmed--if "patrician descent may be read in a distinctive cast of form and features," Hunsden responds,

> Patrician descent be hanged! Who doubts that your lordlings may have their 'distinctive cast of form and features'. . . . As to their women--it is a little different--they cultivate beauty from childhood upwards, and may by care and training attain to a certain degree of excellence in that point--just like the oriental odalisques. . . . Yet even this superiority is doubtful; compare the figure in that frame with Mrs. Edward Crimsworth--Which is the finer animal? . . . It is you, William, who are the aristocrat in your family and you are not as fine a fellow as your plebeian brother by a long chalk. (26)

In Hunsden, Crimsworth meets a man who is more than capable of trumping his self-defensive strategies. Hunsden, whose eye can see "right down into [Crimsworth's] heart" (51), knows exactly what to make of Crimsworth and bluntly tells Crimsworth that his interest in his mother's portrait stems largely from a self-interested desire to differentiate himself as a superior being.

Crimsworth's appropriation of his mother's image is further subverted when Hunsden makes sarcastic comments about the aristocratic over-refinement of Crimsworth's own features and manner:

> . . . [W]ho but an Aristocrat would laugh such a laugh as that and look such a look? a laugh frigidly jeering; a look lazily mutinous; gentlemanlike irony, patrician resentment. . . . Look at the features, figure, even to the hands--distinction all over--ugly distinction! Now if you'd only an estate and a mansion and a park and a title, how you could play the exclusive, maintain the rights of your class . . . . [Y]ou're wrecked and stranded on the shores of Commerce; forced into collision with practical Men, with whom you cannot cope . . . . (37-8).

Emerging from the marginalization which Crimsworth attempts to impose on him, Hunsden decisively ruptures the self-construction Crimsworth attempts to achieve through the female portraits he appropriates in the service of his self-regard. By representing Crimsworth as a poseur who attempts to create a grandiose "patrician" lineage for himself, Hunsden gives us a behind-the-scenes glimpse of Crimsworth's narratorial posture and brings to light the self-serving aesthetics on which his ostensibly rational narrative is based.

As these examples indicate, the whole structure of Crimsworth's narrative is riven with strategic obscurities that result from his self-protective gestures of enclosure which, in their bid for control, are ultimately self-defeating. A significant indication of Crimsworth's tendency to a hopeless solipsism is the fact that a dead letter forms the catalyst for his entire narration. Having sketched, in a letter to an old schoolfriend, Charles, a brief outline of his unsatisfactory life, we

find that his epistolary self-narration has not reached its intended audience. Instead, the letter has been entombed in a drawer to which it has been consigned when Charles, the intended recipient, fails to receive it. As Crimsworth informs us,

> To this letter I never got an answer--before my old friend received it, he had accepted a government appointment in one of the colonies, and was already on his way to the scene of his official labours. What has become of him since I know not. (14)

Foreshadowing the symbolic burial of Lucy's dead correspondence with Graham in Villette, Crimsworth's dead letter symbolizes the sterile solipsism of a constricted and constrained selfhood which resists extension beyond the entombing confines of self-enclosure. Whereas Lucy resists the deadening necessity of such entombment, Crimsworth's story tends to recapitulate, on different levels, the self-defeating strategies of containment which keep him in camera, away from the vivifying forces that threaten his static composure.[5] In his self-defensive solipsism, Crimsworth is himself a dead letter, a fact that Brontë herself implies when she locks Crimsworth, with his "demure Quaker countenance," in a "cupboard by himself." Doomed, like the letter with no recipient, to a buried life, Crimsworth's entombed self-narration is symbolic of his own tendency to deadening self-enclosure.

Particularly absurd is the moment when he retreats

from his brother and sister-in-law to the fastness of his bedroom. In a gesture that is ridiculously self-defeating, he effectively brings the curtain down on his own narrative when he shuts the door in the face of addressee and audience alike: "I soon left Mr. and Mrs. Crimsworth to themselves; a servant conducted me to my bedroom; in closing my chamber-door I shut out all intruders, you, Charles, as well as the rest" (14). And there the chapter ends. In a manner that foreshadows the final, abrupt closure of the novel, Crimsworth effectively shuts out any possibility of communication when he closes the door on himself. Like the occupant of a besieged city, Crimsworth becomes a prisoner of his own defences.

In order to rescue his narrative from the entombment of his dead letter, Crimsworth attempts to reframe his story by shifting from a solipsistic epistolary mode to a form that will align him with the public arena of male discourse:

> The leisure time I have at command, and which I intended to employ for his [Charles'] private benefit--I shall now dedicate to that of the public at large. . . . The above letter will serve as introduction--I now proceed. (14)

He "proceeds" by recontextualizing his story within a discursive movement beyond the private world of letters to a public scopic field where his self-constructions can be framed as part of a masculine discourse. It is a strategy

in keeping with his need to assume postures that will identify him as an authoritative masculine observer. As Boumhela notes, Crimsworth "learns his masculinity as a crucial part of his social progress; he is not only a _self-made_ man, but also a self-made _man_" (49). What informs Crimsworth's attempts to position himself within the public field of masculine discourse is the need to provide a performance of masculinity that is so persuasive as to appear natural. Yet such performances of a constructed masculinity are undermined by their reliance on a marginalized feminine mode of being: the "other" without which the mastery of the masculine eye/I could not be constructed.

Although the Lockean _camera_ is the paradigm of a masculinized rationalism, the image of enclosure is also essential to the definition of the female. By overlapping masculinized and feminized tropes of enclosure, Brontë creates a palimpsestic paradigm that, with deliberate irony, blurs its own boundaries. Such a manipulation of the gendered epistemologies of containment occurs when Crimsworth's distanced, painterly construction of the town of X-- is coupled with his experience of the "small dark cup" at the centre of his "painting."

> At a distance of five miles--a valley, opening between the low hills, held in its cup the great town of X--; a dense permanent vapour brooded over this locality--there lay Edward's "Concern."

> I forced my eye to scrutinize this prospect, I forced my mind to dwell on it for a time, and when I found that it communicated no pleasurable emotion to my heart--that it stirred in me none of the hopes a man ought to feel when he sees laid before him the scene of his life's career--I said to myself, "William--you are a rebel against circumstances . . . . Look at the sooty smoke in that hollow and know that there is your post! There you cannot dream, you cannot speculate and theorize--there you shall out and work!" (15)

When Crimsworth completes his word-painting of the view from Crimsworth Hall, he focuses on the vanishing point of X-- and identifies himself with the dark spot at the centre of the frame where obscurity is "cupped" within the boundaries of X--. Here Crimsworth describes a reversal in which the expansive movement of the sublime from "littleness" to transcendence is ironically subverted by this paradoxically restricted spot of sublimity.

Moreover, by occupying the vanishing point of his own painting, Crimsworth aligns himself with the objective centre of the perspective, thereby constructing himself as the one who is framed and observed rather than as the one who frames and observes, a situation that is dramatized by the progressive enclosures of his entry into the confines of his brother's "Concern":

> . . . [W]e left the clean streets where there were dwelling-houses and shops, churches and public-buildings, we left all these, and turned down to a region of mills and warehouses, thence we passed through two massive gates into a great paved yard, and we were in Bigben Close . . . . [Edward] bid me follow him to the counting-house. We entered it; a very different place

> from the parlours of Crimsworth-hall, a place for business, with a bare planked floor, a safe, two high desks and stools, and some chairs. (17)

As a result of such perceptual inversions, Crimsworth consigns himself to a territory of enclosure so restricted that his metaphysical and aesthetic postures align themselves with the imprisoned perception of the female eye. Through his own manoeuvres, therefore, Crimsworth is recontextualized as a non-authoritative narrator whose "epistemological space" is displaced by the feminine alterity he consistently represses. In the end, he is encompassed within the very trope of enclosure--the "small, dark cup"--that he uses to construct the sight and site of femininity.

Crimsworth's need to rationalize is also exposed by his bafflement at the ambiguity of Hunsden's sexuality. He notices that Hunsden's smile and the habitual "bantering glance of his eye" are replaced by "an abstracted and alienated look" which Crimsworth interprets as the sign of a hermaphroditic sexuality that cannot be accommodated by his rationally defined masculinity:

> I was surprised, now, on examination, to perceive how small and even feminine were his lineaments; his tall figure, long and dark locks, his voice and general bearing had impressed me with the notion of something powerful and massive; not at all--my own features were cast in a harsher and squarer mould than his. . . . [H]is features might have done well on canvass but indifferently in marble--they were plastic; character had set a stamp upon each, expression re-cast them at her

> pleasure--and strange metamorphoses she wrought, giving him now the mien of a morose bull and anon that of an arch and mischievous girl; more frequently the two semblances were bland, and a queer, composite countenance they made. (35)

By attempting to frame the mutable Hunsden within his aesthetic framework, Crimsworth reveals the inadequacy of the system he employs. His admission that he would like "to have a woman's opinion" on the "subject" of Hunsden's "good looks," implies that, for all his rationalizing and systematizing, he is unable to encapsulate and control the ambivalent attractions of Hunsden's ambiguous sexuality. His need for a feminine perspective in the case of Hunsden's "strange metamorphoses" further emphasizes the _pentimento_ that Crimsworth's rationalized vision creates in the matter of gender, especially as the forces of mutation are personified as feminine beings. Here Crimsworth admits that, without the benefit of a female eye, his system of physiognomy cannot encompass the ineffable power of an "object" that refuses to define itself as either male or female.

Like Walpole's _camera_, which constructs the viewer as both container and contained, Crimsworth's narrative constantly shifts between inner and outer, centre and margin, see-er and seen, so that observer and observed lose the "distinction" that Crimsworth attempts to establish in order to "arrogate to himself" the masculine

mastery of his narrative. Instead, the intrusions of latent perspectives eventually gain enough subjective presence to invade the confines of the camera/closet that constitutes the architecture of Crimsworth's self-representation. As his narrative progresses, these marginal presences become pivotal nuances that overlay the epistemological "centre" of the narrative with those margins where other, ambiguously gendered subjects challenge the persuasiveness of Crimsworth's autocratic self-performance.

Eve Sedgwick addresses this paradoxical overlapping of the central and the liminal in her discussion of the closet which she describes as "that curious space that is both internal and marginal to the culture" (56). This internalized marginality is continually articulated in Crimsworth's closeted and closeting narrative by those moments when his mask of centrality slips. As Sedgwick points out in her discussion of the "telling secret" (67):

> Knowledge, after all, is not itself power, although it is the magnetic field of power. Ignorance and opacity collude or compete with knowledge in mobilizing the flows of energy, desire, goods, meanings, persons. (4)

What Crimsworth's opacities attempt to achieve is the suppression of alterity as a competing subject in the "magnetic field of power." Through the ironic exposure of the lapses in Crimsworth's magisterial performance,

Brontë rescues the effaced feminine that also operates on "the axes of oppression" (Sedgwick's phrase). She also determines, through its effacement, the allocation of knowledge, power and sexuality.

As Brontë's ironic comments about "men of business" imply, Crimsworth's professions are meant to be contextualized as masculine performances that depend on the differentiation and suppression of the feminine. However, like the businessmen who casket stores of illicit female desires in their bosoms, Crimsworth's attempt to efface the feminine, paradoxically puts it at the very centre of his self-construction. As his imprisonment in X-- and the "liberty" of Hunsden's room suggest, what Crimsworth attempts to differentiate and subdue as external otherness often determines the status of the _camera_ in which he has "casketed" his selfhood.

The same, ironic process occurs in his attempts to frame the portraits of his female students. Despite his best efforts, his static descriptions of the girls are bracketed by slippages in his own posture of mastery. He complains that "An air of bold, impudent flirtation or a loose, silly leer was sure to answer the most ordinary glance from a masculine eye" (98). One of the girls, a German student, "seems resolved to attract and, if possible, monopolize [his] notice . . . " (99). While

professing to be "quite proof" against her advances, he seems to have scrutinized her physical characteristics rather closely: "[S]he is of middle size, stiffly made, body long, legs short, bust much developed but not compactly moulded, waist disproportionately compressed by an inhumanly braced corset . . . " (98). Another student, Adèle Dronsart, "frequently succeed[s] in arresting" Crimsworth's "gaze" (100). He also takes a prurient interest in Caroline who, despite "the tintless pallor of her skin and the classic straightness of her lineaments," "managed to look sensual" (86). He announces that he "heard her lady-mother's character afterwards, and then . . . ceased to wonder at the precocious accomplishments of the daughter" (86). Although he claims to be a disinterested looker-on at the "fertile variety" of his female students, he betrays a decided susceptibility to their seductions. Moreover, when it comes to the power of the gaze, the girls are notably aggressive in their scrutiny of <u>him</u>: "If I looked at these girls with little scruple--they looked at me with still less" (86). In short, his portraits, designed to reflect his <u>connoisseurial</u> gaze, betray the illicit desires of the <u>voyeur</u> whose "ordinary glance" is focused on the erotic possibilities of the females he affects to despise. As Boumhela points out, even his bout of Hypochondria is

described as an encounter with a "concubine" who has invaded the chaste sanctum of his mind. Hypochondria's attack, as "bold" as the looks of his students, confirms his fear of a feminized irrationality that has the power, not only to appropriate his mental territory, but to construct him as an object within the camera of her hallucinatory projections:

> A horror of great darkness fell upon me; I felt my chamber invaded by one I had known formerly but had thought for ever departed: I was temporarily a prey to Hypochondria. . . . I had entertained her to myself in secret; she lay with me, she eat with me, she walked out with me, shewing me nooks in woods, hollows in hills, where we could sit together, and where she could drop her drear veil over me . . . . (228)

By breaching the boundaries of the mental construct that Crimsworth has adopted, the figure of Hypochondria confirms the permeability of his armoured masculinity, the protective shield he assumes whenever he wishes to escape the penetration of another's scrutiny.

Although he attempts to obscure their influence on his own self-performance, the palimpsestic presence of alternative, often irrational, perspectives in Crimsworth's narration, undermines the epistemological orderliness that ostensibly lends verity to the thoughts and images he projects. These latent projections issuing from the marginalized territory of alterity become "vehicles of unsettling metamorphoses" (Boumelha 45) that

dislodge the epistemological centre of the narrating self and create instead a condition of relativity that cannot be accommodated by the rigid subject/object divisions constructed by the Lockean _camera_. Such epistemological slips tend to invert the conceptual and perceptual structures that Crimsworth appropriates, thereby lending power and credence to alternative forms of awareness that escape the imprisoning confines of his mental paradigms.

One of the most significantly ambiguous spaces in his narrative is the attic room Crimsworth occupies at the Athenée where he is employed as a professor. A closet-like space suitable to the confines of Crimsworth's consciousness, the room inscribes the rational rigidities he has internalized as well as the irrational desires that are subversively "casketed" in the Lockean _camera_ of his mind:

> [I]t was a very small room, with an excessively small bed . . . . Yet, though so limited in dimensions, it had two windows; light not being taxed in Belgium, the people never grudge its admission into their houses; just here, however this observation is not very apropos--for one of these windows was boarded up . . . . (65)

As if to mock his espousal of the sterile enclosures he inhabits, the "excessively small bed" symbolizes the erotic repressions demanded by Crimsworth's excessively reductive frame of mind. Moreover, the window that "enlightens" the room reflects the wasteland of

Crimsworth's overly rationalized sight and insight. Appropriate to the "purifying" restrictions of a Lockean eye that tends to inter what it sees, the transparent window gives Crimsworth the "option of looking at a bare gravelled court" contained by the "bare monotonous walls and windows of a boys' schoolhouse round" (66) Occupied only by an unused "pas de géant" (66), the sterile solipsism of the empty playground belonging to the boys' school reflects Crimsworth's own reluctance to put into play the illicit energies that underlie the rationalized stasis of his mind.

What is inapropos, however, is the boarded window that sheds no light but inscribes, in its opacity, the illicit desires that inhabit the ostensibly rational inhabitant of this camera. Unperforated by the "tiniest chink or crevice," the "tantalizing board" sheds no light on the garden of the neighbouring girls' school, but incites Crimsworth to generate and project a fantasy of visual penetration (66). Unable to see what he imagines to be the "green region below" (66), Crimsworth projects a scene of his imagining where the Edenic garden provides the erotic satisfactions that are notably absent from the schoolyard of the Athenée. As he looks "through" this "sublimely" opaque aperture, Crimsworth describes his desire to spy on the female inhabitants of the

"tantalizing" Edenic region he cannot see but wishes to invade. Like the voyeur he emulates, he exercises the erotic power of the imagining eye to conjure up a feminine object of desire in the absence of a flesh-and-blood female who would find it difficult, in any case, to share his "excessively small bed" (65).

The "tantalizing board," then, is a symbolic repository of mental projections that are not sanctioned by the orderly relations of the rational mind. As his fantasies of an Edenic garden filled with schoolgirls and his fear of Hypochondria's "Necropolis" (228) imply, Crimsworth's Lockean self-performance cannot exclude the "dreadful tyranny" (229) of those mental mutations that invade the fastness of his <u>camera</u> and challenge the masculine persona he assumes when he defines himself as the rational master of his own consciousness. When Crimsworth's eye sees the inner landscape of Hypochondria's Necropolis, he sees himself as the object of her horridly embracing attention. Like the increasingly enclosed and enclosing landscape of X--, that transforms Crimsworth from observer to observed, his morbid mental scene creates a vertiginous enclosure, an "aporic" inner space where see-er and seen are projections unsanctioned by an authorizing epistemology. Closeted by and within his own entombing consciousness, Crimsworth

demonstrates, from this paradoxical perspective, the frightening vunerability of a subject who can be transformed into object.

Complicating even further the involuted subject/object relationships Crimsworth constructs, the "éclairissements" he experiences tend to be ironic exposures of this self-projective theatre on which his epistemology is based. One comic instance occurs when he meets Madame Reuter, whom he mistakes, at first, for Mdlle. Reuter, the Directress of the girls' school to which he wishes to gain admission (in more senses than one) as a professor. Unexpectedly offered his wished-for role as a liberated/libertine man of the world, Crimsworth is invited to Madame Pelet's "closet" in order to take tea. Suddenly taken with the idea that Madame Pelet's invitation to this intimate space might lead to a seduction scene, he stops short on the threshold, wondering if this elderly woman has sexual designs on him: "'Surely she's not going to make love to me,'said I. 'I've heard of old Frenchwomen doing odd things in that line . . . '" (71). Although he is, at first, reassured by the sight of Madame Reuter, whose presence precludes the possibility of any intimate flirtation on the part of Madame Pelet, Crimsworth persists in interpreting the situation as a seduction. He notices "a twinkle and a

leer in [Madame Reuter's] left eye" which he considers "very odd indeed" (73).

After this bit of closet comedy, Crimsworth is summoned to meet the real Directrice, Mdlle. Reuter, and reflects on the "satisfaction" to be gained by his entry into the girls' school:

> It seemed a queer affair altogether, and queerly managed--the two old women had made quite a little intricate mess of it--still--I found that the uppermost feeling in my mind on the subject was one of satisfaction. In the first place it would be a change to give lessons in another seminary, and then to teach young ladies would be an occupation so interesting--to be admitted at all into a ladies' boarding school would be an incident so new in my life. "Besides," thought I, as I glanced at the boarded window, "I shall now at last see the mysterious garden, I shall gaze both on the angels and their Eden." (75-6)

First, however, Crimsworth consults a mirror to ensure that his face wears the right expression for a man of the world who is impervious to feminine seduction:

> . . . [A] thin, irregular face I saw, with sunk, dark eyes under a large, square forehead, complexion destitute of bloom or attraction, something young but not youthful, no object to win a lady's love, no butt for the shafts of Cupid. (77)

After his experience in Madame Reuter's "closet," this masculine catoptrism ironically underlines, not only the performative nature of his self-construction, but also his investment in a "feminine" form of self-reflection that is concerned with appearance. As soon as he meets Mdlle.

Reuter, however, he falls prey to the Edenic fantasies of the "tantalizing board." He is enchanted by everything about Mdlle. Reuter: her "cabinet," her garden, and her person:

> I commenced the conversation by remarking on the pleasant aspect of her little cabinet and the advantage she had over M. Pelet [Director of the boys'school] in possessing a garden. . . . But it was not only on Mdlle. Reuter's garden that my eyes dwelt; when I had taken a view of her well trimmed beds and budding shrubberies, I allowed my glance to come back to herself, nor did I hastily withdraw it. (79)

When he is invited to walk with her along the "allée defendue" to the centre of the garden, it seems to Crimsworth that his fantasies of penetration into this female Eden are "more than realized" (106).

The final irony, however, occurs after the "tantalizing board" is removed and he looks from his window onto the moonlit garden. Here he sees and overhears an assignation between Mdlle. Reuter and M. Pelet, who are engaged to be married and have been amused by the spectacle of Crimsworth unwittingly playing the dupe in their plot. A "panoptic" viewer whose moment of enlightenment is ironically illuminated by the "feminine" moonlight of romance and unreason, Crimsworth becomes an audience to the scene of his own disillusionment. Bridling with outrage when he finds that he thought he was playing the lover but was unknowingly playing the dupe, Crimsworth

tries to rescue his dignity with an ostentatiously prim refusal to be seduced into this role again.

Yet, despite this professed refusal, Crimsworth is unable and also unwilling to resist the "penetration" of the female optics he had intended to conquer with his armoured, masculine gaze. When as the observer, he finds himself in the position of the observed, Crimsworth always retreats behind the curtaining armour of impassivity where (like the businessmen in Brontë's Preface) he can "casket" the "stores of romance" he paradoxically treasures yet disowns. The irony of this situation is that this self-armouring, like all his self-enclosures, leaves him in a space as restricted as the spaces of femininity. Such a reversal occurs when, in an attempt to foil Edward's masculine scrutiny, he confines himself to an optic space as stifling and blinding as the domestic "cells" reserved for women: "I thought he was trying to read my character but I felt as secure against his scrutiny as if I had on a casque with the visor down . . . " (21). However masculine his armoured being may seem, it leaves him as enclosed and restricted under Edward's eye as a woman imprisoned by a male gaze.

The trope of enclosure becomes even more invested with irony when Mdlle. Reuter's penetrating scrutiny forces him into a self-gorgonization that is reminiscent

of the female statues created by his own <u>connoisseurial</u> gaze:

> Me, she still watched, still tried by the most ingenious tests, she roved round me, baffled yet persevering; I believe she thought I was like a smooth and bare precipice which offered neither jutting stone nor tree-root nor tuft of grass to aid the climber. . . . Still she persevered and at last--I am bound to confess it, her finger, essaying, proving every atom of the casket--touched its secret spring and for a moment--the lid sprung open, she laid her hand on the jewel within . . . . (105)

Forcing him into the "female" space which he has been at pains to differentiate from his "masculine" self-entombment, Mdlle. Reuter "pierces" his armour and attempts, in this scene of perceptual rape, to take the "hidden treasure" of the erotic, romantic desires that he buries under his posture of impassivity.

Although Hunsden and Mdlle. Reuter threaten Crimsworth's narrative authority, it is Frances Henri whose marginal presence paradoxically becomes the "central perception" that challenges both his self-construction and his construction of female alterity. It is significant that Frances appears after Crimsworth's discovery of Mdlle. Reuter's duplicity, because Frances offers an opportunity to recontextualize his position and to reclaim the authority he has lost as a result of Mdlle. Reuter's manoeuvres.

Part of his strategy of recontextualization is a

recapitulation of the "portraits" of the female students which are meant to be accepted as the last word on the "genus jeune fille." Here, he attempts to reposition himself as the superior viewer/artist who, from the height of the "master's" podium, attains the professorial perspective designed to subdue the "tumult" of his monstrous female students. In this second discussion of his students, he concentrates on distinguishing the foreign girls from the modest and austere Protestant attractions of Frances Henri, who, in default of Mdlle. Reuter, now becomes the primary object of his attention:

> I felt assured at first sight that she was not a Belgian, her complexion, her countenance, her lineaments, her figure were all distinct from theirs and evidently the type of another race--of a race less gifted with fullness of flesh and plenitude of blood, less jocund, material, unthinking. (122)

In Frances, Crimsworth thinks he has found a less carnal, more intellectual woman who will suit his own austerely rational inclinations but will not challenge his professorial authority, which he exercises with a vengeance in the schoolroom. His intention is evident in the classroom where he looks over Frances's exercise (in a manner reminiscent of Zamorna's) in an offensively casual manner after he has deliberately mortified her with his "relentless" dictation (123). Although he sees very few errors in her work, he finds a means of deflating any

pretension by stingily categorizing, in one of his "very small retail parcels" of "praise and blame" (135), her hard-won achievement with the single word, "Bon" (124), making it clear that she has earned the brief notice of a superior mind.

In a continuing attempt to reconstruct himself as the master of his narrative and its "secondary" characters, Crimsworth continues to pass judgement on Frances's mind and character. Since he has cast her as the unassuming Protestant maiden, he cannot accuse her of the hypocritical play-acting that he associates with his foreign students as well as his foreign masters and mistresses. Instead, when he is impressed by Frances's writing, Crimsworth resorts to conventional aesthetic judgements by means of which he hopes to appropriate and manage her intelligence and creativity. On the first occasion, he announces that her work contains "proofs of taste and fancy," which are not the "highest gifts of the human mind" (137). Nevertheless, he generously advises her that she may "derive free and full consolation from the consciousness" that her "faculties are both strong and rare" (137). Like the _connoisseur_ whose understanding is more comprehensive than the artist who is "too involved in the making of art to take a broad and disinterested view of its cultural meaning and significance" (Bermingham 14),

Crimsworth's judgement of Frances is an affectation designed to give him the upper hand in their aesthetic competition.[6] But, despite his best efforts, Crimsworth cannot definitively frame Frances as the object of his possessive gaze. Frances, like Hunsden, does not fit within the confines of his categorical and categorizing vision. Whereas Crimsworth professes to be able to perceive the "knots, long stitches and jagged ends" hidden behind the "tapestry" of female character (120), it is Frances, the woman he claims to see so clearly, who reveals the faults in the "tapestry" of his masculine narrative. Rather than functioning as a flattering feminine mirror reflecting the authority of his eye/I, she illuminates the "slips" that reflect <u>his</u> misperceptions. Little errors, such as Crimsworth's mistake concerning the colour of Frances's eyes (a mistake Rochester also makes in <u>Jane Eyre</u>), are small, narrative "imperfections" that indicate the "excessively narrow" compass of a perceptual and conceptual apparatus designed, not to envision the eye/I of female genius, but to frame women as passive reflectors of Crimsworth's own masculine "genius."

Frances's satisfyingly self-effacing demeanour is ultimately shown to be a pose hiding a truly superior mind, which Crimsworth ludicrously portrays as a

consciousness dependent on his judgement of its capacities. Despite his attempt to circumscribe her, Crimsworth fails to repress the revelation of her "triumphant smile" which tells him:

> I am glad you have been forced to discover so much of my nature; you need not so carefully moderate your language. Do you think I am myself a stranger to myself? What you tell me in terms so qualified, I have known fully from a child. (137)

In the face of Frances's powerfully anomalous smile, Crimsworth's narrative loses the cohesion he wishes it to achieve. By including telling details like Frances's "triumphant smile," Crimsworth exposes the chaotic "ragged edges" that he attempts to conceal behind the professed integrity of his authorial "tapestry" and tacitly admits to the imperfect comprehension of his eye/I. When he describes how the "sun" of Frances's genius "transfigure[s] her "countenance," Crimsworth records a creative amplification that his own enchambered vision can neither contain nor conceive.

In attempting to gain ascendency over an imaginative perception that evades his control, Crimsworth finds himself out-manoeuvred by the object of his attention. Because he is unable to appropriate the sublime creative power that Frances knowingly possesses in her own right, Crimsworth's God-like attempt to recreate her in his own image does not carry the epistemological conviction of a

clearly-perceived and perceptible representation. In another bid for narrative authority, he tells the reader, "it is not my intention to communicate to you at once, a knowledge I myself gained by little and little" (123). By refusing to portray Frances as anything but an image that gradually "develops" within the camera of his mind, Crimsworth, with unconscious irony, undermines the very authority he is attempting to achieve. In attempting to efface Frances so that she will appear only as the product of his perception, he displays a wilfulness incompatible with the connoisseurial gaze of the rational perceiver whose authority is invested in disinterested vision.

Because of the wilfulness evident in his construction of Frances, every obscurity Crimsworth imposes on her merely serves to shed more light on the unacknowledged agenda of his narrative. When he watches Frances with her own "boisterous students," he tries to make it seem that Frances is "pained" by his discovery of the "insubordination" that she is too weak to quell. However, certain details indicate that Frances is not the weak and vulnerable object he attempts to represent. His language, for instance, is highly tentative. Frances' students "seemed very little under her control," whereupon "she seemed to entreat order" [my emphases] (125). Although he claims to be able to "read her eye," he wonders if he has

failed to read it correctly because he overhears Frances "suddenly and sharply " telling Amélie, "the eldest and most turbulent of the lot," that she, Frances, will neither speak to nor help Amélie "for a week to come" (125). Lastly, Crimsworth admits that, because "two doors closed" (125) [my emphasis] between him and Frances, he is unable to describe the rest of the scene. Reminiscent of the closed bedroom door at his brother's house, this hyperbolic closure of Crimsworth's Lockean aperture not only discloses Crimsworth's excessively framed point of view; it also exposes the self-defeating repressions of a doubly blocked perspective that cannot be relied upon to convey the unadulterated reality he promises at the beginning of his narrative.

At first it seems that his intentions toward Frances consist of a disinterested enjoyment in watching the development of her faculties. He even goes so far as to say that, what he "had termed Taste and Fancy ought rather to have been denominated Judgment and Imagination," which are among "the highest gifts of the human mind" (146). But this admission is significantly qualified by the erotic satisfaction he takes in the development of her body:

> To speak truth, I watched this change much as a gardener watches the growth of a precious plant, and I contributed to it too, even as the said gardener contributes to the development of his favourite. (148)

In taking credit for Frances's intellectual and physical "flowering," Crimsworth betrays a Pygmalion-like desire to possess the thing he has created, and is gratified that, under his eye, Frances has been "improved" and "awakened to life." Now that her features and figure have softened into a "bloom, and a plumpness almost embonpoint," she forfeits her austere self-sufficiency to become an object/mirror that reflects Crimsworth's <u>connoisseurial</u> tastes and desires:

> Her figure . . . became rounder, and as the harmony of her form was complete and her stature of the graceful middle height, one did not regret (or at least <u>I</u> did not regret) the absence of confirmed fullness, in contours, still slight, though compact, elegant, flexible--the requisite turning of waist, wrist, hand, foot, and ankle satisfied completely my notions of symmetry, and allowed a lightness of freedom of movement which corresponded with my ideas of grace. (147-8)

Just as his eroticizing of Frances suggests that his professions of professorial disinterest mask an illicit desire, Crimsworth also betrays himself in his struggles with those demons whose invasion of his mental <u>camera</u> challenge his professed cognitive mastery. Crimsworth admits as much when he experiences the nightmarish birth of the creations his mind has secretly incubated. Unwilling to admit his emotions when Frances leaves the school and disappears, Crimsworth claims that he is a "reasonable man" who is capable of keeping his

"resentment, disappointment and grief" from growing "to any monstrous size" (65). Yet, when he is in his chamber, "these morose nurslings" emerge from the "strait and secret nook" where he contains them (160): "[T]hen in revenge--they sat on my pillow, haunted my bed and kept me awake with their long, midnight cry" (160). Here the reasonable man becomes hysterical and conceives "monstrous" incubi that have gestated in the hidden "nooks" of his mind. Subverting the orderly picture gallery of the Lockean _camera_, the image of Crimsworth's buried irrationality defies his posture of _connoissance_.

Because such haunting occurs shortly before his wedding with Frances, it is difficult to avoid the assumption that, in wooing and wedding Frances, Crimsworth is inviting into his innermost life a chaotic power that his rationalized consciousness can neither supersede nor control. In fact, with the introduction of Frances, Crimsworth's control is increasingly challenged by the perceptual and cognitive inadequacies she brings to light. When she quits the school, Frances moves beyond Crimsworth's confines and requires him to follow her into areas of disorientation where his perceptual and cognitive apparatus cannot so easily appropriate either the shape of her experience or the contours of her self.

In one of the casual rambles during which he keeps an

eye out for the missing Frances, Crimsworth leaves the town limits and enters the "Brobdignagian" fields around Brussels (165). Suddenly without the perspective that enclosure provides for the rationalization of illimitable spaces, Crimsworth finds himself _ex-camera_, where his visual/spatial framework is of no help to him. Moving among the huge fields where he has suddenly become a tiny object in the landscape, Crimsworth undergoes a reversal of visual perception that leaves him in the decidedly unmasterful position of a _dis_oriented observer. His perceptual and cognitive processes cannot categorize this suddenly enlarged and undifferentiated perspective where flat fields stretch "far and wide, even to the boundaries of the horizon" (165).

This loss of subjective authority becomes increasingly evident in the series of false assumptions Crimsworth makes as he approaches his second "discovery" of Frances. Lost in the featureless landscape, he is happy to find a white-walled enclosure that he mistakenly assumes to be the walled garden of a villa (165). He carefully describes his approach and, when he enters the gate deduces, from the evidence of "crosses, monuments, and garlands of everlastings" (166), that he has, in fact entered a graveyard. Here his "short-sighted vision" catches the impression of a "dusky shade . . . appearing

and disappearing at the openings in the avenue" (167). He then perceives that it is a "living thing and a human being", a woman walking alone and unaware of his presence (167). Finally, after this laborious visual progress, he puts on his spectacles and discovers Frances.

Recapitulating his "discovery" of Frances in the schoolroom, this encounter in the graveyard particularly emphasizes the distortions generated by Crimsworth's myopic vision, and the effects of these distortions on his narrative authority. As Crimsworth's "objective" vision becomes increasingly suspect, his view of Frances also becomes increasingly tenuous and tenebrous. A "dark shade" that "appears and disappears" from his sight, Frances comes into focus only when Crimsworth happens to put on his glasses (167). Certainly his myopia implies that the "clarity" of his vision cannot always be trusted. The "hazel" eyes that he sees so clearly in his bespectacled view of Frances later become "brown" eyes (122, 227). The disclosure of this optical dependency, which makes us wonder how often he has myopically "wandered" in the spaces he professes to control, subverts his perceptual authority and encourages investigation of the perceptual hinterland that emerges on the margins of his short-sighted vision.

Unable to perceive the disturbing implications of his

own myopic vision, Crimsworth continues his attempts to appropriate Frances under the egoistic authority of his rationalized vision:

> I loved her as she stood there . . . thinking such thoughts as I thought, feeling such feelings as I felt, my ideal of the shrine in which to seal my store of love. . . . I knew how the more dangerous flame [of passion] burned safely under the eye of reason [in Frances] . . . and, as I drew her arm through mine and led her out of the cemetery, I felt I had another sentiment . . . --that of love. (169)

Although he suggests that, under the moderate impulse of this reasonable "fervour," he and Frances will leave the entombing confines of the graveyard, Crimsworth also implies that he prefers Frances, not as a creative and procreative living woman, but as a receptacle that will preserve, like a funerary urn, the moderate quantity of his solipsistically rationalized love.

Although she seems to collude in this encasement by referring to Crimsworth as "Mon Maître" (169), Frances later displays a subversive resistance to Crimsworth's entombed and entombing ideal. After a period of separation during which both Frances and Crimsworth look for other employment, he unexpectedly visits Frances at her lodgings and overhears her recitation of a poem. Assuming that she is expressing her feelings for him, Crimsworth decides that "it is now permitted to suffer the outward revelation of the inward glow, to seek, demand, and eliciting ardour" (222). Like

the vision he rations when he first arrives in Belgium, Crimsworth's passion is expressed only when it is allowable to do so. Far from being swept away by his feelings, Crimsworth proceeds to rationalize them in a brief philosophical dissertation on the subject:

> There are impulses we can control, but there are others which control us, because they attain us with a tiger-leap and are our masters ere we have seen them. Perhaps, though, . . . reason, by a process as brief as it is quiet . . . has ascertained the sanctity of the deed Instinct meditates . . . . (222)

Framed by this relentless rationalization, Crimsworth's expressions of love take on an ominously overdetermined quality that is expressed in the "exceeding tenacity" of the grip with which he holds Frances in his lap (223). Caught in his embrace, Frances sits as "stirless in her happiness, as a mouse in its terror" (224). Ominously trapped by her repressively "impassioned" suitor, Frances responds with reserve to his proposal of marriage. Employing his own strategies against him, she takes "[s]ome moments . .. for reflection" before she agrees to "pass [her] life" with him. (225). When Crimsworth announces with ominous Biblical paternalism that he will now be able to "give her rest," she does not respond with her "usual respectful promptitude" to this sepulchral invitation (226). Understandably reluctant to be enraptured by Crimsworth, Frances insists that she must

work with "unrestrained" effort, and does not deny that she is "laying plans to be independent of" him (225). With her "little fingers emphatically tightened" on Crimsworth's hand she emphasizes her determination not to be "kept" in the domestic tomb he envisages (226). When Crimsworth responds to her resistance by telling her that she will be able to "read and study" in the domestic _camera_ he envisages, Frances responds by declaring in a statement that belies her seeming quiescence: "Monsieur, I could not; I like a contemplative life but I like an active life better; I must act in some way and act with you" (226). By constructing herself as the "active" agent in this marriage, Frances's declaration does not sort well with Crimsworth's efforts to entomb her in the _camera_ of his husbandly authority.

Another instance of Frances's insubordinate vivacity occurs when Crimsworth takes Hunsden to meet Frances at her lodging. Frances entertains them in a room that, to Crimsworth, looks like a "little polished cabinet" (234). He retires to the window-seat where he can see Hunsden, Frances "and the room, too, at a glance" (234). Comfortably settled as the master of this Lockean space, Crimsworth witnesses a metamorphosis that challenges his perceptual appropriation of Frances (and her _camera_) and transforms him from the magisterial observer into the

audience of a scene that should be taking place in a "Lover's Camera Obscura." Hunsden's interaction with Frances sparks a mutual animation that underlines Crimsworth's confinement to the morbid, erotically impotent isolation of the Lockean observer. As she speaks with Hunsden, Frances becomes markedly animated (234). Enjoying an increasingly unrestrained argument, Hunsden and Frances transform the decorous "cabinet" into a theatre *in camera* where they enact an erotically charged scene. "She had many things to say to the Englishman . . . and she urged him with an enthusiasm of curiosity, which erelong thawed Hunsden's reserve, as fire thaws a congealed viper" (235). Appearing as the snake in Crimsworth's cabinet Eden, Hunsden threatens Crimsworth's God-like authority by vivifying and seducing the woman Crimsworth would like to construct as the passive inhabitant of his own cognitive architecture. Although Crimsworth claims credit for creating Frances, it is Hunsden's fiery, satirical resistance that allows her to display her animated and protean self within the deadening, objectifying confines of Crimsworth's Lockean gaze.

A quiet observer in the "closet" of the window-seat, Crimsworth is ironically revealed as the voyeuristic prisoner of his own perspective which alienates him from

the animated beings he beholds. Like all voyeurs, Crimsworth prefers the distancing gaze because it accommodates his self-serving projections while protecting him from the jarring anomalies of lived experience. Determined to remain within the "Möbius enclosure"[7] of his self-projections, Crimsworth refuses to acknowledge the increasingly frequent disruptions of the self-validating world he struggles to narrate.

After his marriage, however, Crimsworth begins to compress his narrative as if he realizes that he cannot maintain the measured narration required of the detached, professorial observer. As he loses perceptual control of Francis, he also loses his narrative grip. From the moment of her appearance, his story shifts more decidedly from a self-centred account of his triumph over circumstance, to an account of Frances's "progress." Although he would like to claim that he is the one who "worked his way through life," the "thoroughgoing contingency in Crimsworth's life" undermines his "self-help" posture (Boumelha 45). As Boumelha observes, it is "not he but Hunsden" who "initiates his departure for Belgium; not he but Mdlle. Reuter who brings about access to that Eden . . . the girls'school" (45). Moreover, "those critical events not engineered by others are generally fortuitous, notably Crimsworth's "finding" of

Frances, which occurs completely by chance (Boumelha 45). Most important, however, it is Frances's determination and talent, which rivals that of Mdlle. Reuter, that contributes most to the Crimsworths' success.

Like a resurrected Mdlle. Reuter, Frances becomes a masterful Directress who is no less able than her Belgian alter-ego and is, presumably, no less able to "penetrate" and subvert Crimsworth's postures of dominance. And at Daisy Lane, where Frances runs her flourishing school, she continues to show a disturbing capacity for metamorphosis:

> In those moments, happy as a bird with its mate, she would shew me what she had of vivacity, of mirth, of originality in her well-dowered nature. She would shew too some stores of raillery, of "malice," and would vex, tease, picque me sometimes . . . with a wild and witty wickedness that made a perfect white demon of her while it lasted. (253)

Crimsworth patronizingly and rather ominously describes how he would "turn upon her" and "arrest that bodily sprite" that "teased" him (253). But, as he admits in his declaration "Vain idea!," Crimsworth is not really capable of such an "arrest" of Frances: "[N]o sooner had I grasped hand or arm and the elf was gone . . . . I had seized a mere vexing fairy and found a submissive and supplicating little mortal woman in its place" (253). Here Crimsworth seems to be returning Frances to the frame of his gaze and the space of his husbandly authority. But, in describing Frances's transformation from "vexing

fairy" to "supplicating little mortal woman," Crimsworth also inscribes an elusive figure who has become adept at slipping out of his grasp. Like the evanescent images in the shadow play of the magic lantern, Frances's protean (and strategic) enactments are beyond his grasp. Indeed, she "abandons" Crimsworth every night to look at their son. Procreative as well as protean, Frances is a being who works against Crimsworth's deadly and death-like stasis by confronting him with yet another creative "mutation" in the shape of his son, who is appropriately named Victor.

Crimsworth's mastery is further undermined by the threatening presence of Hunsden, who joins forces with the already disturbing ambiguities of Frances. Although he tries to represent his family's retirement in "Daisy Lane" as an idyllic existence, Crimsworth's space is increasinly invaded by "incubi" he cannot control. The picturesque house where he keeps his family is often invaded by the demonic Hunsden who leaves his "shadowy abode" (where he plays host to intellectual subversives) to "work [Crimsworth] into mental lunacy by treading on [his] mental corns, or to force from Mrs.Crimsworth, revelations of the dragon within her . . . " (259). By encouraging the eruption of the brimstone that lies beneath the decorous conjugal scene in Daisy Lane, Hunsden plays a

Byronic Devil's advocate who abets the disruptions Crimsworth is attempting to contain. Like the monstrous incubi of irrationality that Crimsworth houses in his mind, his orderly little abode in Daisy Lane harbours volcanic emotional forces that threaten to engulf the carefully constructed camera of his narrative.

The killing of Victor's dog is emblematic of the pressures that drive Crimsworth to ever more desperate measures to preserve the rational repressions that are the underpinnings of his cognitive and narrative constructions. Crimsworth shoots Yorke without compunction or hesitation when Yorke is bitten by another, rabid dog and then rationalizes his brutal act as a necessary measure; but his motives are obviously far from rational. For Crimsworth, Yorke (who is named after Hunsden) represents those secret, irrational passions that he would prefer to kill if he could: fear of the madness he secretly harbours in himself; jealousy of the emotional ties between Victor, Frances and Hunsden;[8] and, finally, fear of the bestial, erotic nature that he cannot exorcise from the camera of rational authority.

Under the pressure of this increasingly intrusive irrationality, Crimsworth's narrative loses much of its magisterial deliberation. Instead, the last chapter in his narrative becomes a desperate exercise in compression

that reflects Crimsworth's frantic attempt to rescue his narrative from the mutating forces that threaten it. The narration that is meant to make a slow, controlled progress, developing "little by little," is swept along as "[t]en years . . . rush upon [Crimsworth] with dusty, vibrating, unresting wings . . ." (249). As he struggles to master his narrative, time joins forces with passion to undermine this last chapter which is, ironically, meant to reveal what is hidden behind the curtained painting in Crimsworth's mental gallery.

Threatened by the fluidity of time and the "demons" which surround and possess him, Crimsworth strives to reinstate the static space of the Lockean _camera_ with its orderly management of perceptual experience. Hoping to preserve himself _in camera_, Crimsworth writes against time in a desperate effort to resist the self-dissolving incursions of unrationalized experience. The final scene of the novel shows Crimsworth sitting in his study, literally "writing to the moment." Frances sits beside him waiting for him to go out to the garden for tea. As if determined to "deflower" the Lockean aperture of Crimsworth's _camera_/study, Hunsden aggressively pokes his head "through the lattice from which he has thrust away the woodbine with unsparing hand" (268). He shouts at Frances to take the pen out of Crimsworth's hand as if to

indicate that, not only the space, but the instrument of Crimsworth' authority and authorship is about to be usurped.

When Victor calls, "Come, papa," he encourages Crimsworth to join him _ex camera_ in a quotidian world where the chaotic manifold of life overrules the aridities of the Lockean chamber. Instead, Crimsworth chooses to bring his narrative to a sudden halt. Like the closing door inscribed in the "dead letter" that paradoxically "opens" his narrative, this abrupt closure is a final solipsistic gesture desperately designed to fix, in the face of life's mutating force, the _camera_ of his eye/I. Here Crimsworth chooses to monumentalize a moment that will, like a sudden "still shot" in a film, keep Frances enchambered in his study, keep Hunsden's impregnating presence at the threshold of his intellect, and keep his progeny safely outside the "cell" of his mind. In a measure that recalls the premature killing of Victor's dog, Crimsworth abruptly cuts off his narration because he is afraid to risk the uncontrollable "disease" of the temporal and the irrational that threatens the structure of his perceptual and cognitive architecture. Unable to contain the dangerous but vivifying mutability that animates Frances, Hunsden and Victor, Crimsworth chooses to entomb them all in a catastrophic narrative closure

that will remain forever a monument to his own deadly self-enclosure.

Thus, in The Professor, the defensively rationalized subject increasingly loses ground to the ironizing presence of characters such as Hunsden, Mdlle. Reuter and Frances Henri, whose resistance to Crimsworth's objectifying strategies also represents a resistance to Crimsworth's construction of the masculine self as the author and authority of the female other. The gendered rationalism that culminates in the self-defeating truncation of Crimsworth's narrative is exposed as a failure of the Lockean subject to accommodate a metamorphic sexuality that refuses to be contained by rigid differentiation.

Growing in the doubled frame of Crimsworth's narrative, this antic mutability aligns itself with the sexual ambiguities that Crimsworth's self-narration is designed to repress. Despite his efforts to create himself as a male subject whose magisterial stability is reflected in his control of the female other, Crimsworth's monolithic self-construction remains open to penetration by a subversively invasive other. Just as the rock of his self-defensive armour remains open to the "finger" of Mdlle. Reuter's probing, Crimsworth's narrative cannot resist penetration by those sexually ambiguous others

whose complex subjectivity is masked but not effaced by his objectifying rationalizations. Because they are the self-created inhabitants of his self-construction, these "objects" exist by virtue of his subjectivity and cannot be erased without self-erasure--as the self-defeating ending of his narrative demonstrates. In this paradoxical circumstance it is impossible for Crimsworth to objectify completely those sexually complex beings who threaten his posture of monolithic masculinity. Ultimately, he remains vulnerable to the very ambiguities his narrative is designed to police; his structure of masculine authority becomes, increasingly, the habitation of a sexual complexity he refuses to acknowledge but which, nevertheless, subversively makes its presence felt.

In terms of the Lockean camera, this subjectively projected objectivity is inadmissible because its existence bears witness to the fact that the _camera_-metaphor, in the final analysis, fails to rationalize the paradox on which it is based: however stable the subject/object relationship constructed by the _camera_-metaphor may seem, its rationalization of this relationship is based on a radical subjectivity that precludes perceptual access to an object without subjectivity. As the failure of Crimsworth's self-construction implies, this paradoxical subjectivity of the

object is always there to sabotage the subject/object boundary that distinguishes the masculine self whose authority is vested in the differentiation of the female-as-other. If what the subject perceives outside the aperture of the *camera* is, in effect, a self-reflective projection, then the feminized "object" can be construed as the reflection of a radically subversive subjectivity that will always invalidate the gendered rationalism supporting such distinctions between, subject and object, male and female, self and other.

Chapter V

Metamorphosis _In Camera_: _Jane Eyre_ and the Theatrics of Selfhood

In _The Professor_, the space of the masculine authority is an enclosure besieged and undermined by the unsettling metamorphoses of a marginal female subject. In _Jane Eyre_, with its female autobiographer, the liminal space of female being shifts from the margin to the centre. Whereas Frances Henri resists Crimsworth's monolithic authorial will by emerging as a subversive subject in his gaps and erasures, Jane Eyre is the central consciousness of her own narrative and able to articulate directly, as Frances cannot, the pressures of female confinement within a perceptual and conceptual order that assigns cognitive and creative power to the male mind. Epitomized in the window-seat, the female enclosures in _Jane Eyre_--while still embedded in the sovereign sites and sights of masculinity--represent the liminal and less rigidly defined epistemological and aesthetic spaces where the female subject articulates herself within the imprisoning structures of a male-oriented culture. Whereas perspectives of dominance in _Jane Eyre_ still rely, as they did in _The Professor_, on the Lockean paradigms that underwrite the authority of male perception and

cognition, the spaces and perspectives of the female subject in _Jane Eyre_ are more thoroughly invested with a theatrics of being whose metamorphoses _in camera_ resist the authoritarian enclosures of the Lockean self.

In Jane's narrative, the female subject manifests itself as a non-entical mode of being that refuses to collude in the catoptric completion of male authority. As Jane explores the territory of self-creation, she deploys the specular and the spectral--not in the service of a masculine scopic field where women are consistently represented as the validating objects of male desire--but as part of a larger theatrics in which spectrality and specularity are associated with subversive metamorphoses that resist the monolithic subject of male self-representation. The spaces and perspectives of Jane's narrative engage this metamorphic theatrics and gesture towards a subject that resists alignment with the authoritarian boundaries of the Lockean _camera_. Refracted through the virtualities of spectral and specular representation, the non-collusive female self in _Jane Eyre_ is represented as a dynamic, ambiguous subjectivity that inhabits the imprisoning enclosures of masculine culture but also inscribes these spaces as theatrical _cameras_ where a subversively creative selfhood can be enacted.

The cognitive territory of _Jane Eyre_ is palimpsestic, made up of overlapping and contiguous spaces allowing for

a subjective engagement that interrogates the ground and the boundaries of the Lockean subject. Functioning simultaneously as material enclosures and as spaces of consciousness, the structures and landscapes that Jane enters are complex because they both contain and represent her. Jane's movement through the rooms and regions she inhabits marks these spaces as the cognitive sites of an ongoing self-exploration and self-creation. As Karen Chase has said of _Jane Eyre_, "psychic life, spiritual life, domestic life, all appear as matters of arrangement, of architecture, of spatial relation" (65), an overlapping of architecture and selfhood that Maggie Berg also observes: "Gateshead, Lowood, Thornfield, Whitcross, Marsh End, and Ferndean symbolize, as their names suggest, the "genius" of place, and they represent Jane's condition while she inhabits them" (28).[1]

What the spaces of _Jane Eyre_ represent is a complex overlay of architecture and selfhood that contextualizes the objective world as part of the theatrics of self-creation. Where the subject of the Lockean _camera_ relies on the other to validate its perceptual authority, the subject _in camera_ in _Jane Eyre_ incorporates otherness as part of the play of self-representation. Without effacing the painful reality of her circumscribed existence, Jane keeps faith with the idea of a dynamic subjectivity that moves among the _cameras_ of male-dominated culture and

claims these seemingly imprisoning spaces as sites of a created and creative selfhood that transcends and transgresses its imprisoning boundaries. While she learns at Thornfield, through Rochester's manipulative play-acting, that her own investment in imagination and theatricality can work against her, Jane also refuses to submit to the equally dangerous moralistic rationalism of St. John. As Maggie Berg points out, Jane chooses, finally, to define herself as a being whose "authority" is inscribed, not within the boundaries of a patriarchal hegemony, but within the self-creating territory of her own narrative:

> We have seen that adherence to the moral law, to reason, to the "iron shroud" of patriarchal tradition, is so repressive as to be for Jane equivalent to "suicide" . . . . She refuses to submit to the wills of God or the men in her life: "It was _my_ time to assume ascendency. _My_ powers were in play and in force" (_Jane Eyre_ 445). Powers that were to culminate in the fictional autobiography. (_Jane Eyre: Portrait of a Life_ 116)

What Jane asserts in her act of self-narration is a power that refuses to validate the structures of a patriarchy whose norms are inimical to the expression and representation of the female subject. Instead, she operates transgressively, by engaging those spaces (like the window- seat discussed below) which allow for an interactive subjectivity that affirms the created nature of self-construction and subverts the naturalized hegemony

of the monolithic male subject. For Jane, the search for self is equally a search for a theatrical space of being that undermines the Lockean _camera_'s differentiation of self and other: a space that can recreate the _camera_ as a site of subjective interprojection where the external other is incorporated within the metamorphic territory of the self. What Jane asserts in the very art of her autobiography is the fact that the construction of the self _is_ an art, an ongoing performance that gestures, not toward a unitary, authoritarian selfhood, but to the process of creative self-representation.

Whereas Crimsworth is always at pains to confirm (however inadequately) the rational integrity of his narrative, Jane Eyre openly identifies her narrative as a piece of theatre:

> A new chapter in a novel is something like a new scene in a play; and when I draw up the curtain this time, reader, you must fancy you see a room in the George Inn at Millcote with such large-figured papering on the wall as such inn rooms have: such a carpet, such furniture, such ornaments on the mantel-piece, such prints; including a portrait of George the Third, and another of the Prince of Wales, and a representation of the death of Wolfe. All this is visible to you by the light of an oil-lamp hanging from the ceiling, and by that of an excellent fire, near which I sit in my cloak and bonnet . . . . (112)

In this detailed scenography Jane "grounds" her narrative in the imaginative faculty of her audience and, in the process, gestures towards the intersubjectivity on which her narrative "reality" is based. In this passage, she

emphasizes the staging of a virtual reality where narrative self-creation is constructed as a profoundly theatrical process that relies, not on subject/object differentiation, but on the degree of resonance that can be achieved between and among interacting subjectivities.[2] In this overtly "staged" narrative, the Lockean dividing line between self and other is replaced by an area of resonance that invites the interprojection of selves. By placing her narrative in this theatrical dimension, Jane Eyre identifies Jane Eyre as a self-creation that is achieved within the dynamic of theatrical intersubjectivity, not on the ground of an empirical/rational reality.

In contrast to Crimsworth's ultimately absurd commitment to a monolithic self which depends on the radical otherness of the other, Jane acknowledges a self that extends into alterity. Her narrative consciousness is constructed, not as a self-defensive enclosure against the other, but as a dynamic that facilitates what Gaston Bachelard describes in The Poetics of Space as "a sort of interior transfer, an Uebertragung which carries us beyond ourselves into another ourselves" (82). For Jane, narrative is structured as a theatre of the self where the subject is constituted, not in the self-defensive antagonisms of the authoritative, Lockean subject but in a transference of subjective "realities." Indeed, with its

validation of the oneiric "reality" of dreams as well as visionary and para-natural experience,[3] Jane Eyre constructs the female self as the manifestation of a complex and paradoxical reality that resides as much in the mysterious, generative powers of mind as it does in the materiality of the external world.

In keeping with the mutable and complex construction of selfhood which her story validates, Jane is herself an actress whose subjectivity is as fluid as the intersubjective ground on which her narrative is based. Echoing her narrative's commitment to the non-definitive self, Jane constructs herself as a mutable and mutating presence constantly in the process of self-creation. She is described by Rosamund Oliver as a "sport of nature" (470), an as-yet-undefined being who takes shape, not in some fixed subjectivity, but in an ongoing process of self-exploration and self-extension. Very early in her narrative she is identified by Mrs. Reed as a "precocious actress" (16), a being who refuses to take shape except as an ungraspable subjectivity that defies categorization. By refusing "to acquire a more sociable and childlike disposition, a more attractive and sprightly manner,--something lighter, franker, more natural as it were" (3), Jane indicts herself in Mrs. Reed's eyes as unnatural and unauthentic, a "false" performer who challenges the naturalized postures Mrs. Reed expects. As Jane explains,

as far as the Reeds' perceptions go, she is not a girl but an object alienated from the accepted parameters of subjecthood:

> They were not bound to regard with affection a thing that could not sympathize with one amongst them; a heterogeneous thing, opposed to them in temperament, in capacity, in propensities; a useless thing, incapable of serving their interest, or adding to their pleasure; a noxious thing, cherishing the germs of indignation at their treatment, of contempt of their judgment. (13-14)

Under the authority of Mrs. Reed's "formidable eye" (29), Jane appears as a "false" subject who has no place in the perceptual territory of Gateshead. With her gorgonized and gorgonizing gaze, Mrs. Reed aligns herself with the Lockean subject whose authority derives from the rigidly differentiated objectivity of the other. At Gateshead, in Mrs. Reed's magisterial visual field, Jane appears as a scandal, an inadmissible subjectivity that can be tolerated only in the guise of the alien and other. To survive within the self-destroying parameters of the Reed household, Jane constructs herself as a masquerading object, a disguised subjectivity which shapes itself as a radically ungrounded being that haunts the performance of otherness.

It is in the red-room that Jane most clearly demonstrates her own alignment with the theatrical extension of the self and its capacity to inhabit the other. When Mrs. Reed imprisons Jane in the red room, her

intention is to force Jane's compliance with the perceptual regime under which Gateshead is ordered. As an entirely unacceptable "picture of passion" (8), Jane is expected to contain herself, to conform to a perceptual decorum that requires an object unhaunted by the scandalous passions of selfhood. Ironically, however, Mrs Reed's imprisonment of Jane results in further, scandalous extensions of Jane's impassioned self. In this imprisoning space where she is meant to return to a stable order of being, Jane envisions a spectral alter-reality where an other/self "embodies" the very passions Jane's imprisonment is meant to annihilate.

> All looked colder and darker in that visionary hollow than in reality; and the strange little figure there gazing at me, with a white face and arms specking the gloom, and glittering eyes of fear moving where all else was still, had the effect of a real spirit . . . . (12)

As if conjured from the depths of her scandalously impassioned self, the spectral image reflected in the mirror offers a space of being where the theatrics of the self can be manifested, even within the confines of an imprisoning reality. By means of this spectral <u>camera</u> in <u>camera</u>--the "space" of the mirror enclosed within the confines of the room--Jane sees an alternative selfhood which "embodies" the illicit, haunting subjectivity that Mrs. Reed is at such pains to suppress.

In fact, this spectral selfhood expands, through

Jane's imaginings, beyond the space of the mirror into the room and rationally constructed reality itself. Wherever Jane looks, she imposes her own "necromantic" fancies on the outlines of the room. The bed is transformed into a "tabernacle" and an "easy-chair" with a footstool becomes a "pale throne" (11). The "dark mahogany" furniture-pieces lose their materiality to serve as "dark, surrounding shades" out of which the bedcurtains rise "high," looming white and ghostlike. Out of the mundane ingredients of a rather heavily furnished bedroom that has, until her imprisonment,inspired only "a sense of dreary consecration" (11), Jane conjures up all the paraphernalia of a gothic romance.

For Jane, this theatrical extension of the self becomes a means of self-assertion, a sublime, imaginative vision that obscures and expand the outlines of Mrs. Reed's reality, to force the imprisoning _camera_ of the red-room to reflect, not the external reality that oppresses her, but an internal envisioning that reflects her hidden selfhood. By means of such iconic and spatial appropriation, Jane conjures up a virtual space of being and mode of vision and gives them place (however spectral) in the _camera_ of rational authority. In fact, the very name of the room suggests that, for all Mrs. Reed's cold authoritarianism, the imprisoning spaces of Gateshead are already inhabited by the "red" presence of an impassioned,

suppressed female subjectivity which might well include Mrs. Reed's own rigidly repressed fears and desires.[4]

This spectral reality manifests itself most intensely, however, when Jane experiences the "swift-darting beam" of light that enters the darkened room as "a herald of some coming vision from another world" (15). Possessed by her "necromantic" imaginings, she responds to this "otherworldly" ray of light as if it were, indeed, a transcendental vision rather than a prosaic lantern beam: "My heart beat thick, my head grew hot; a sound filled my ears, which I deemed the rushing of winds: something seemed near me" (15). By responding to the light as if she inhabited the space of her own imagining rather than the mundane bedroom at Gateshead, Jane performs herself in this _camera_ at Gateshead and makes it resonate with the subjectivity and surreality of the "thing" that the Reeds refuse to acknowledge as a human being.[5] In the red-room, Jane is, as she later says "out of herself." She becomes a haunted and haunting being whose doubled selfhood challenges the integrity of the unitary subject and its imprisoning spaces by affirming an impassioned spectrality that transgresses the boundaries of self-containment. However frightening, the intensity of this spectral experience is the impetus that leads Jane to her rebellion against Mrs. Reed's authority when, once again, she experiences herself as a doubled being: "something spoke

out of me over which I had no control" (28). Although Jane soon feels ashamed of the outburst in which she expresses her hatred for Mrs. Reed, it marks the beginning of her rebellious search for an uncircumscribed existence that would defy the restrictive limits set upon her by the likes of Mrs. Reed: "[M]y soul began to expand, to exult, with the strangest sense of freedom, of triumph, I ever felt. It seemed as if an invisible bond had burst, and that I had struggled out into unhoped for liberty" (39).

In a final tour de force that "closes the scene" (16) in the red-room, Jane perversely affirms her subjectivity by bringing the curtain down on her narrative consciousness. Like an actor exiting the stage at a dramatic moment, Jane inscribes the power of her presence through an emphatic absence. At first glance, this abrupt closure would seem to be, like Crimsworth's truncation of his narrative, a self-defeating gesture of self-assertion. However, what distinguishes Jane's radical closure from Crimsworth's is its construction as a piece of theatre. When she declares that "unconsciousness closed the scene," Jane underscores the ineffectuality of an imprisonment that succeeds only in illuminating the powerful subjectivity of the "thing" Mrs Reed wishes to objectify. By absenting herself in this manner, Jane dramatically demonstrates that it is her consciousness, her subjectivity, that shapes the play. It is the camera of

Jane's consciousness, the "space" of her subjectivity, that is constructed by its absence as the very stage on which objectivity and subjectivity are enacted.

Thus, in contrast to The Professor, where Crimsworth's self-creation is aligned with the stabilities professed by the Lockean self, Jane's openly theatrical narration is doubly destabilized by the theatrical nature of its narrated and narrating subject. By the same token, Jane's subjectivity also eschews Crimsworth's monolithic posture in favour of a regenerative theatrics of self-renewal. Although the fainting fit seems as catastrophic, narratively speaking, as the abrupt closure of Crimsworth's story, the word "scene" implies a theatrical progression that promises regeneration in the form of yet another scene, a promise that is fulfilled when Jane leaves for Lowood, a move which she interprets as "an entrance to a new life" (25). In this context, the imprisonment of the self, however painful, is never absolute. There is always the possibility of a new "scene."

Thus, Jane's deployment of the theatrical self is strategically redemptive. For her, the movement of subjective extension activates a necessary fluidity which she invokes to challenge the perceptual rigidities that threaten to annihilate her at Gateshead. However, Mrs. Reed's mistrust of Jane as an actress who is, by

definition, a false subjectivity, is a suspicion that Jane ignores at her peril. As long as she does not conform to the objectivity that Mrs. Reed wishes to impose, she is in danger of being cast as a monstrous anomaly whose subjectivity is entirely illicit. This is a danger Jane herself realizes when she says, in a passage reminiscent of Mrs. Reed's anathematization of her as a "precocious actress," "I saw myself transformed under Mr. Brocklehurst's eye into an artful, noxious child . . . " (36). By stigmatizing her as a false self, Brocklehurst attempts to confirm her status as an object. In collusion with Mrs. Reed's "cairngorm eye" (286), Brocklehurst's field of vision requires Jane to enact a compliant objecthood that will distinguish him as an authoritative subject. As Jane is aware, "Reed, Brocklehurst and Co." (75) is a collective representation of a rigidly rationalized consciousness in which the self is defined by an antagonistic differentiation of the other. Completely hostile to the illicit selfhood that Jane represents, Brocklehurst and the Reeds appear as self-defensively armoured selves who, like Crimsworth, cannot admit the projections of another self.

For Jane, such hardened exclusivity represents an inimical differentiation that will not and cannot accommodate her. In the space of consciousness "owned" by Reed, Brocklehurst and Co., Jane must always be an

interloper, a disguised subjectivity that can exert itself only antagonistically against the structures that implacably define her as other. Imprisoned by an exclusive and excluding subjectivity, Jane's theatrical self functions as an illicit fluidity that constantly threatens the integrity of the authoritative self.[6] Moreover, by aligning herself with the authority-dismantling metamorphoses of theatre, Jane also aligns herself with an illicitly female mode of being. As Auerbach, quoting theatre historian Cary Mazer, explains, women performers were seen as incorporating a particularly dangerous form of mutability. There was, in nineteenth-century theatre,

> a genuine fear of a woman actually _acting_ . . . ; of the actress finding in her own soul the freedom of emotional expression of the character she plays; of the actress being corrupted by the moral impurity of the character, or, most significantly, being corrupted by the very transgressive act of becoming someone else, of finding within herself other selves to come. (80)

For Jane, then, the theatrical self represents a subversive subjectivity that can usefully endanger the integrity of such oppressive male subjects as Brocklehurst. The spectral subjectivity that theatre accommodates can be deployed on behalf of a female self that may, thereby, find a means to evade and to resist the perceptual grasp of masculine authority. Male characters, while they are challenged by the female subjectivity

inscribed in Jane's narrative, appear consistently in positions of perceptual authority.

As we have seen in an earlier discussion of the scene between Jane and John Reed (see Ch.I), John is the first of the masculine "masters" whose brutal objectification of Jane is meant to express her objectivity and his mastery of her within the space he owns by right of inheritance. As a member of Reed, Brocklehurst & Co., John belongs to a conspiracy directed at denouncing Jane's claims to subjectivity and self-ownership. In John's camera, Jane is placed in his visual field as an object whose objectification is meant to affirm him both as an authoritarian observer and as the bourgeois master of his house and his possessions. In fact, by warning Jane, before he hits her with the book, to stand away from the windows and mirrors (presumably so that he will not break anything but Jane's head) he also refuses to allow her access to those visual surfaces through which she might construct herself, not as a blind object, but as a seeing subject.

In accordance with such policies of Reed, Brocklehurst and Co., Brocklehurst is also an authoritarian observer whose objectifying vision is entirely antithetical to female subjectivity. An embodiment of the monolithic authority he imposes, Brocklehurst appears as the "black pillar" (33) Jane first

saw at Gateshead, a "piece of architecture," "looking longer, narrower and more rigid than ever" (70). Having taken up a ruling position at the hearth, Brocklehurst takes visual possession of "the whole school" and its female inmates (70). From this position of perceptual dominance, he proceeds to repress all signs of self-expression in the female objects under his eye. As he sermonizes Miss Temple concerning the self-mortifying benefits of burnt porridge, she gradually "takes on the coldness and fixity" of "marble" (73), as if submitting to the petrifying self-restriction that the gorgonizing "black pillar" imposes. Because Julia Severn has a too-assertive "excrescence" of curly red hair, the entire first form must "rise up and direct their faces to the wall" in a communal gesture of self-effacement (73). In the field of Brocklehurst's eye/I, the schoolroom becomes the site of an authoritative vision where any trace of the female "excrescence" constitutes an affront to the male eye, as is evident in Brocklehurst's reaction to Julia's overly expressive red curls: "Suddenly his eye gave a blink, as if it had met something that either dazzled or shocked its pupil . . . " (73).

Although Rochester is not as antipathetic as Reed or Brocklehurst, he nevertheless ensures that, in the rooms at Thornfield where he is master, he will stand in the authoritative position of the observer. As Peter Bellis

has noted, Jane is "in a position of social and visual dependence" at Thornfield (642). When Rochester summons Jane to the dining room, he "position[s] her in the room as peremptorily as John Reed had done" (Bellis 642): "Don't draw that chair further off, Miss Eyre; sit down exactly where I place it--if you please, that is" (158). Rochester's careful placement of Jane within the room is a strategic positioning meant to affirm her subservience and his perceptual mastery, a mastery of which he is entirely aware: "My position, Miss Eyre, with my back to the fire and my face to the room, favours observation" (171).

St. John, too, is guilty of the same magisterial deployment of vision when he observes Jane.

> St. John's eyes, though clear enough in a literal sense, in a figurative one were difficult to fathom. He seemed to use them rather as instruments to search other people's thoughts than as agents to reveal his own: the which combination of keenness and reserve was considerably more calculated to embarrass than to encourage. (441)

Like Rochester's, St. John's visual strategy is designed to "favour" the observer while placing the observed at a disadvantage. This is a position that is reiterated later when Jane, "framed" in the doorway of her cottage, discovers herself under the "gaze" of St. John who has been watching her from a distance (460).

For Jane, who must negotiate the oppressive perceptual mastery of the male subject, the fluidity of

the theatrical self offers a subjectivity which, because it does not rely on the absolute differentiation of self and other, can exist as a suspended form of being, occult but present. She creates a similarly non-entical female self when threatened at Lowood by Brocklehurst's hostile objectifications. To Jane, who prefers the "glorious tumult" that occurs during the brief break between breakfast and lessons when it is "permitted to talk loud and more freely" (51), the entry of Brocklehurst--with his "long stride" that "measured the school room" (70)--signifies the imposition of a controlling subject who wishes to measure and restrict the expansive liberty of the expansive selfhood that Jane delights in. This impulse towards subjective liberation, first experienced at Gateshead, remains a potent force at Lowood too. Although Jane learns to mute her passionate nature through the example of Miss Temple, the subversive enactments of female subjectivity are not entirely suppressed at Lowood--even in the case of the self-contained Miss Temple. However much she may be trapped within the camera of Brocklehurst's authoritarian eye/I, Jane finds traces of a female power that resists containment and mastery.

In an observation reminiscent of Mary's satirizing smile in Brontë's early work, Jane reports that "Miss Temple passed her handkerchief over her lips, as if to

smooth away the involuntary smile that curled them" (73-4). Jane also notices and notes the "looks and grimaces with which [the girls] commented on [the] manoeuvre" (demanded by Brocklehurst) of turning their faces to the wall (74). Through her narrative attention to such seemingly insignificant details, Jane undermines Brocklehurst's visual authority. She exposes his blindness and rescues from his obscuring vision the counter-manoeuvres perpetrated by the rebellious beings who embody the fiery "excrescence" of the female self. But, in describing these female selves obscured by Brocklehurst's gaze, Jane does more than merely ironize Brocklehurst's vision. She inscribes for them a "medium" that is inaccessible to objectifying vision. Seemingly frozen into stone under his gaze, the living self of Miss Temple is invisible to Brocklehurst as are the vivid grimaces of the girls who only show him the "reverse" or objectified side of the "living medals" that Jane sees (74). As Jane observes, "whatever he might do with the outside of the cup and platter, the inside was further beyond his interference than he imagined" (74). Sheltered from his "interfering" vision, the female self is constructed as a profound subjectivity that inhabits--without actually taking the shape of--the objectified entities that Brocklehurst sees. The paradoxical space "inside" the cup and the platter where the female self is

hidden is, in effect, a non-space that "houses" an equally non-entical female subject: a subject that remains radically undefined and undefinable within the context of male vision.

Brought up short against the incomprehensible void of the female subject, the magisterial male gaze is forced to acknowledge the insufficiency of its comprehension. Deflected by what it cannot see, the monolithic Lockean subject is cast as the professor of a perceptual authority it cannot claim. In its place, Jane Eyre proposes a shadow, a mutability that shapes and reshapes itself, not as a stable entity but as a potentiality that can never be realized within the static framework of a rationally constructed subject. It is on this retransformative but emphatically non-entical ground that Jane's self-narration is "based" because, only as a non-entity can Jane elude the destructive objectification imposed by the binaristic structure of the Lockean subject. For Jane, there is no "medium" that will accommodate her subjectivity without also destroying it. As a female subject trapped in a world determined by the rigidities of the rationalized self, she must choose between two equally destructive options:

> I know no medium: I never in my life have known any medium in my dealings with positive, hard characters, antagonistic to my own, between absolute submission and determined revolt. I have always faithfully observed the one, up to

> the very moment of bursting, sometimes with volcanic vehemence, into the other . . . . (511)

With no "medium" between the extremes of abject objectivity and equally self-destructive rebellion against such objectification, Jane must construct a self that avoids both extremes. Her solution is to figure a shadowy, non-entical female self that, invisible to the antagonistic gaze of the rationalized subject, is paradoxically constituted in the female self's very non-entity.

Unlike the well-defined parameters of the Lockean _camera_, the space of non-entical subjectivity in _Jane Eyre_ is not committed to absolute differentiation of inside and outside, self and other. Like the space between the inside and the outside of the platter, the _camera_ of theatrical selfhood is figured as a site of contiguity _between_ interior and exterior. Referring to yet resisting the Lockean architecture of the self, this site of contiguity finds its most striking analogue in the window-seat, the marginal space where Jane finds sanctuary first at Gateshead and later at Thornfield. In the window-seat, the space of being is figured as a dynamic, liminal architecture that is situated on the boundary of inner and outer. It is a site of interface and overlap between the spaces of subjectivity and alterity. A _camera in camera_, the window-seat (like the mirror in the red-room)

represents a theatricality or virtuality which interacts with and complicates the rationalized parameters of selfhood. For instance, when she is "shrined" in the "double retirement" of the window-seat at Gateshead, Jane exists as a complexity of interactions. Sitting against the window, Jane is separated from but also close to the "drear November day" from which she is sheltering. "Folds of scarlet drapery shut" Jane's view to the right. To her left are "clear panes of glass, protecting but not separating [her] from the drear November day" (4). Like the aperture in a Lockean closet, the window shapes her as an interior self divided from an exterior other; but the contiguity of the window, its much greater size and the fragility of glass as a barrier against the elements combine to amplify the presence of otherness, and structure it as an integral part of the sanctuary of the self.

This proximity of the other to the self is further complicated by Jane's subjective projections within the camera of the window-seat. Inside her draped enclosure, Jane sits with a favourite book, Bewick's History of British Birds, and creates for herself a subjective alterity that foreshadows the spectral reality of the mirror in the red-room. Bewick's book becomes for Jane a site where she can exercise an autonomy of vision that

enables her to create an expansive, self-generated world within the harsh, constraining reality of Gateshead. As she examines the "letter press" and the vignettes, Jane conjures up the sublimely "vast sweep of the Arctic Zone" encompassing the "bleak shores of Lapland, Siberia, Spitzbergen, Nova Zembla, Greenland [and] Iceland" (4-5). In creating this subjective alterity, Jane envisions an expansive otherness that is embedded in and contiguous to the externality at the window. Like the moment of unconsciousness which closes the "scene" in the red room, Jane's imaginative refiguring of Bewick's vignettes and letterpress inscribes a powerful subjectivity that, however constrained, can still exert itself as a ground of being that transcends and encompasses the mundane parameters of the Lockean self. Although small and marginal, the enclosure of the window-seat accommodates a complexity of being that the rigidities of the Lockean _camera_ would disallow. Linked by the theatrical symbolism of its crimson curtains to the narrative "curtain" that opens and closes the "scenes" in Jane's story, the window-seat encompasses a theatrics of selfhood in which subjectivity is inscribed, not as a self-contained and self-containing entity, but as a play of subjective extension articulated by openings and closures that mark the movement of the subject through the realities it

engages and creates.

Enclosed by the transparency of glass and the soft veil of a curtain, the window-seat, while it facilitates Jane's creation of subjective alterities, also remains remarkably "open" to the presence and movement of the other. As Tromly notes, the window-seat is an "uncertain refuge":

> Jane is considerably less secure in her enclosure than was William Crimsworth in his casque with the visor down. Only the clear panes of glass protect her from the drear November day; and, as John Reed soon demonstrates, she is extremely vulnerable to intruders. (44)

However, if Jane is vulnerable to John's intrusions, the permeability of her curtained enclosure also facilitates her engagement with him. In fact, John's brutal attempt to objectify Jane ironically leaves him vulnerable to her theatrical intrusions. When she falls and cuts her head, Jane's terror disappears, to be replaced by "other feelings" (8). Rebelling against his treatment of her, she accuses John of being a "murderer" and "slave driver" like the "Roman emperors." Her accusations incite John to attack her, but, as he finds, "he had closed with a desperate thing" (8). By "closing" with John, Jane erases the distance between them, and John, for all his rights of possession, loses the field to Jane and is forced to call for help. In this inversion of their situations, Jane re-

establishes herself, however momentarily, as a potent subjectivity whose presence has at least as much validity as John's. Certainly their names, Eyre and Reed, suggest that they are both committed to a transience that undermines even the ostensibly solid substance of John's all-too-material self.

By re-enacting the scene of her objectification, Jane draws John, too, into the self-projective theatre of her dynamic subjectivity. This capacity to extend her self from liminality into the space of the other, also serves her at Lowood where Brocklehurst, like Reed, attempts to consign her to objectivity. Again, her strategy is to re-enact the scene of her objectification and to reshape it, instead, as a scene of subjective interaction so that she emerges, not as an inert object, but as an other/self who is, in her objectivity, the paradoxical equal of the magisterial Brocklehurst. As at Gateshead, the Lowood scene begins with a "calling out." Hidden behind her slate in an enclosure as fragile as the window-seat, Jane hopes to avoid the eye of Brocklehurst. But, just as John finds her out in the window-seat, Brocklehurst sees her when her "treacherous" slate crashes to the floor, announcing her presence (75). Brocklehurst then attempts to exert his authority by anathematizing her as a monstrosity who has no legitimate place in the space he

"owns."

> "My dear children . .. this is a sad, a melancholy occasion; for it becomes my duty to warn you, that this girl, who might be one of God's own lambs, is a little castaway: not a member of the pure flock, but evidently an interloper and an alien. You must be on your guard against her; you must shun her example: if necessary avoid her company, exclude her from your sports, and shut her out from your converse. . . . Teachers you must watch her . . . --this girl--is a liar!" (76-7)

Whereas John throws a book, Brocklehurst "hits" Jane with an equally damaging denial of her subjectivity. Like Mrs. Reed, he defines her as a false subject, a lying "actress" whose scandalous subjectivity must be differentiated as alien and other if his authority is to prevail. Ironically, however, the "thing" he has "called out" refuses to remain inert and passive. Just as Jane emerges from the window- seat to "close" with John, she emerges from the "cover" of her slate to "close" with Brocklehurst and, in the process, reclaims his space as the "scene" of <u>her</u> subjectivity.

This subversive refiguration of Brocklehurst's schoolroom as the site of her paradoxical ascendence is reflected in the equally paradoxical "pedestal of infamy" (77). Meant to function as the site of Jane's degradation, this "very high stool" (77) becomes a perceptual pivot, an ambivalent site that simultaneously signifies her debasement and her elevation. While

enduring the humiliating ascendency of the stool, Jane finds herself ironically raised to Brocklehurst's level:

> I was placed there, by whom I don't know: I was in no condition to note particulars; I was only aware that they had hoisted me up to the height of Mr. Brocklehurst's nose, that he was within a yard of me . . . . (76).

Whereas Brocklehurst means this "hoisting" onto the stool to be an enactment of her subservience, the movement is inadvertently interactive in that it "joins" Jane to him in an ironic equality which places them both at the same height and in the same magisterial position at the centre of the room. Under Brocklehurst's nose, so to speak, and with his unwitting collusion, Jane inscribes a contiguity that, like her closure with John Reed, allows her to assert a projective subjectivity with the power to "close" the space between self and other, and recreate it instead as a site of subjective interaction.

What the "pedestal of infamy" represents, then, is an analogue of the window-seat. As in her window-seat encounter with John, Jane inscribes a male/female interaction that defies the gendered authority of Brocklehurst's vision. This dynamic of equalization that is constructed out of the contiguity of subject and object, also implicates the theatrical self, the subject that emerges (as Jane emerges from the window-seat and from the shelter of her slate) and extends itself into the

space of authority. Like the drama that unfolds from the window-seat at Gateshead, the scene in the schoolroom involves Jane's performance as a rebel resisting the tyranny of male ownership. While Brocklehurst thinks he is objectifying Jane, she is, in fact, enacting a rebellion that will ultimately lead to his "overthrow" by the slave he oppresses. Like the dynamic of the windowseat that allows Jane to possess the vast, frozen wastes of Bewick's book as a subjective alterity, Jane's theatrical possession of the schoolroom creates a virtual space of being that allows her to project her subjectivity (as she does in the mirror space in the red-room) so that this virtual "reality" appears as "real" as the space of masculine authority that she is forced to inhabit as an object.

It is this dynamic of subjective equalization, this insistence on the doubled, intersubjective nature of "reality," that later allows Jane to address Rochester as another self, despite the fact that, as an object, she must appear small, insignificant and plain:

> "Do you think because I am poor, obscure, plain, and little, I am soulless and heartless?---You think wrong!--I have as much soul as you,--and full as much heart! . . . I am not talking to you now through the medium of custom, conventionalities, nor even of mortal flesh:--it is my spirit that addresses your spirit; just as if both had passed through the grave and we stood at God's feet, equal--as we are!" (318)

The same dynamic also informs another confrontation with Rochester when Jane resists his assumption of authority by denying the superiority of his experience over her more enclosed life. Rochester asks Jane,

> "[D]o you agree with me that I have a right to be a little masterful, abrupt; perhaps exacting, sometimes, on the grounds I stated: namely that I am old enough to be your father, and that I have battled through a varied experience with many men of many nations, and roamed over half the globe, while you have lived quietly with one set of people in one house?" (163)

She, in her turn, denies that he has such authority:

> "I don't think, sir, you have a right to command me, merely because you are older than I, or because you have seen more of the world than I have--your claim to superiority depends on the use you have made of your time and experience." (164)

As blind as Brocklehurst to the hidden life in Jane's seemingly limited experience, Rochester sees only the outside of the "cup and platter," and assumes that Jane is his to command because she has not attained the same degree of subjecthood that his masculinity has awarded him. Like John Reed, who believes (wrongly) that the female life hidden within the window-seat can be constructed as an insignificant object in the magisterial space of his room, Rochester assumes that the insignificance of Jane's life will allow him to treat her as his inferior. It is an assumption she challenges when she asserts herself as a potential equal whose subjective life can equal his own, despite its seeming limitations.

As she tells him, he cannot claim the right to command merely by virtue of his masculine authority. He must take account of another dimension where the external standards of masculine superiority have no meaning. What Jane requires of Rochester is an acknowledgement of another "medium" of selfhood that constructs itself qualitatively rather than quantitatively. She wishes him to recognize a "ground" where all selves, by virtue of their quality rather than range of their experience, can have value, even those subjectivities that, like the non-entical subjectivity in the window-seat, or the spectral self of the mirror, seem to have no extension in the world--except when they appear within the range of male vision as insignificant "objects."

As the subversive equalizations at Gateshead and Lowood imply, the perceptual territory of male authority is problematic for a female subjectivity that relies on an alternative "medium" of subjective expression. Vision, in particular, is suspect, because the eye, above all other faculties, is what informs the male subject and sets the parameters of a space of being that defines the female as other and object. To recreate vision as subjective interplay, as the non-objectifying faculty of a non-entity, the theatrical self must evade the visual strategies of the Lockean subject while finding a means to

envisage its own elusive selfhood. To this end, Jane resists the visual power of Reed, Brocklehurst and Co. by defining their vision as a "blind" vision that cannot perceive the spectral selfhood of the female other. She locates the space of the female subject (like the "real" girls whom Brocklehurst fails to see) always beyond the visual grasp of the authoritative perceiver. In place of the grasping eye of the male observer who always places the female as the objective observed, Jane proposes a visual dynamic that facilitates intersubjective rapport yet does not fix or own the objects of its gaze.

Such vision does, in fact, "rescue" Jane from the humiliations imposed by Brocklehurst, when Helen Burns passes before her and, by the power of her glance, sets Jane (whose resolve has been failing) more firmly on the "ground" of her theatrical selfhood.

> What an extraordinary sensation that ray sent through me! How the feeling bore me up! It was as if a martyr, a hero, had passed a slave or victim, and imparted strength in the transit. I mastered the rising hysteria, lifted up my head and took a firm stand on the stool. (78)

In this instance, Jane experiences an infusion of subjective power that identifies Helen as a subject who not only does not require Jane to be an object, but also implies that subject positions are open to change and renewal, that the tyrant/slave dichotomy on which Brocklehurst's ascendancy depends is not definitive but

subject to challenging metamorphoses. The female "object" who seems a slave and victim can (as John Reed found in his battle with Jane) recast herself as a hero or martyr. The visual communication and communion which Jane experiences reawakens such possibilities; but this time it is an intersubjective exchange that is all the more powerful in its enlivening force after the gorgonizing effects of Brocklehurst's vision. Here, the visual dynamic between Helen and Jane is emphatically intersubjective. In contrast to Brocklehurst, whose vision is designed to gorgonize his female audience, Helen is a female whose vision is directed at the de-objectification of a fellow subjectivity. The interchange between these two is a redemptive visual dynamic that not only animates and strengthens Jane's subjectivity, but invests it with the potential for empowering change.

When Jane moves to Thornfield, the construction of vision in the context of intersubjectivity becomes more complex. Whereas Gateshead and Lowood are spaces of a male mastery that is antagonistic to Jane, at Thornfield, she must cope with a more ambiguous relationship with Rochester, a relationship that is simultaneously an antagonism and a resonance. A place of mystery, Thornfield does not offer the perceptual "norms" that structure the authoritative spaces of Gateshead and

Lowood. As Jane herself notices, she is in a region that her cognition cannot encompass. Even before she leaves Lowood, she recognizes Thornfield as an unknown territory:

> I wished the result of my endeavours to be respectable, proper, <u>en règle</u>. I now felt that an elderly lady was no bad ingredient in the business I had on hands [sic] . . . .Thornfield! that, doubtless, was the name of her house: a neat, orderly spot, I was sure; though I failed in my efforts to conceive a correct plan of the premises. (105)

As her admitted inability to "map" the space of Thornfield suggests, Jane is prophetically conscious of entering a space that cannot be mastered by reason. Whereas the theatricalization of the self could serve Jane against the objectifying strategies of Reed, Brocklehurst and Co., the process of intersubjective projection becomes far more problematic in a place where a theatrical male subject prevails. Because, at Thornfield, all subject/object interactions are masquerades designed to keep Jane from discovering Rochester's secret, Jane is forced to fathom the parameters and the dynamic, not only of Rochester's perceptions, but of her own.

In Rochester, the "master" of Thornfield, Jane discovers a male consciousness that is in sympathy with her transformative subjectivity, yet that also retains the rigidities of the Lockean subject. When Rochester describes himself as an "india-rubber ball" with a "chink" in it (161), he proposes a self that bears some relation

to Locke's camera, but also suggests possibilities that the Lockean structure of the self would like to preclude. Although he is, like Locke's subject, cast as an enclosed subjectivity, the round shape of the ball and the organic elasticity of its material suggest a regenerative pliability that is absent from the rigid rectilinearity of the Lockean camera. Thus, when Rochester asks if there is some hope of his "re-transformation" from "Indian-rubber back to flesh" (161), his self-construction as a hardened but still elastic self implies that he is capable of being regenerated in another shape.

Thus Rochester is subtly constructed as a subject whose masculine selfhood has always been informed by a destabilizing changeability. This ambiguity of self-construction that is markedly absent in the Reeds and in Brocklehurst, makes Rochester a much more baffling antagonist, because, ambiguous as he is, he has the capacity to project himself beyond the objectifying trajectory of male vision. Rochester manipulates Jane by conducting an oblique courtship that does not seem to be based on the rationalized visual dynamic of masculine authority. Whereas Reed, Brocklehurst and Co., are identified by an inimical authoritarianism characterized by Brocklehurst's petrifying gaze, Rochester's influence over Jane does not rely on this "hard", impermeable optics

of mastery. As Jane remarks of Rochester: "He made me love him without looking at me" (219). In contrast to the antagonistic perceptual regimes of Reed, Brocklehurst and Co., whose implacable differentiations cannot admit Jane except as a "thing," Rochester's self-construction has (like the india-rubber ball) sites of permeability where resonance with Jane's female subjectivity is possible.[7] His eye, despite an underlying will to mastery, is associated with a mode of vision that is emphatically projective and connective. Rochester's mode of seeing is seductively non-objectifying and seems to have much in common with the galvanizing projectivity of the glance that Helen Burns bestows on Jane: "He bent his head a little towards me and with a single hasty glance seemed to dive into my eyes" (163). "My eye met his as the idea crossed my mind: he seemed to read the glance, answering as if its import had been spoken as well as imagined . . . " (165). In Rochester, Jane finds a male subject whose seductive visual play seems to promise the same empowering intersubjectivity.

For Jane, Rochester's capacity for self-projection is, in some ways, a very welcome interaction that the rigid norms of the Lockean subject disallow. It is through such projection, for instance, that Jane is able to absorb impressions to which she would otherwise

have no access:

> It was his nature to be communicative; he liked to open to a mind unacquainted with the world, glimpses of its scenes and ways . . . and I had a keen delight in receiving the new ideas he offered, in imaging the new pictures he portrayed, and following him in thought through the new regions he disclosed; never startled or troubled by one noxious allusion. (180)

Here it is Rochester's "retransformative" nature, his seductive power to align himself with her female being, that makes him so compelling to Jane.

What makes her connection to Rochester even more powerful is its reciprocal, interprojective nature. However self-serving his intent, Rochester acknowledges Jane as a subjectivity, a "mind" whose "peculiar" powers are connected to his own:

> "I know what sort of a mind I have placed in communication with my own; I know it is one not liable to take infection: it is a peculiar mind: it as an unique one. . . . The more you and I converse, the better; for while I cannot blight you, you may refresh me." (176-7)

Jane herself realizes that this subjective resonance is powerfully operating in her:

> The ease of his manner freed me from painful restraint: the friendly frankness, as correct as cordial, with which he treated me, drew me to him. I felt at times, as if he were my relation rather than my master . . . . (180)

However, this interconnectedness becomes increasingly perilous for Jane, who comes very close to losing herself in Rochester's mysterious domain, a danger which is

expressed in Jane's almost unconscious invocation of his presence within the sanctuary of her window-seat. During her visit to Gateshead, at the time of Mrs. Reed's death, Jane takes a seat "near the window." In this window-seat-like space, Jane begins to draw a face which grown, almost without her own volition, into an animated portrait of Rochester.

> One morning I fell to sketching a face: what sort of face it was to be I did not care or know. . . . Soon I had traced on the paper a broad and prominent forehead, and a square lower outline of visage: that contour gave me pleasure; my fingers proceeded actively to fill it with features . . . . There I had a friend's face under my gaze: . . . I smiled at the speaking likeness: I was absorbed and content. (292-3)

While she seems as "absorbed" in the creating of Rochester's portrait as she was in her imaginative engagement with Bewick's book, Jane, in this case, is far more passive than when was when she "formed an idea of [her] own" to match the book's descriptions of "the vast sweep of the Arctic Zone" (4-5). In the making of this "automatic portrait," as Maggie Berg defines it (69), Jane demonstrates how perilously close she is to being possessed by Rochester and his "shadow play." Like a spectre appearing through a passive medium, the image of Rochester seems to appropriate both the creative will and the space of being Jane has, until now, reserved for herself.

Even more clearly indicative of Rochester's wish to invade and master the territory of Jane's female being, is his masquerade as the old gipsy woman. By disguising himself as a female seer, Rochester intends to gain access to the private territory of the women (especially Jane) whom he tempts into the "gypsy's" chamber. Jane, who leaves her "usual nook" (238)--the window-seat--to come to him, is taken in by his masquerade and allows herself to be "wrapped in a kind of dream" (250), and wonders "what unseen spirit had been sitting for weeks by my heart watching its workings and taking record of every pulse" (250). By duplicitously appropriating not only the theatricality of female being but also the spectral, visionary power which Jane's narrative increasingly validates, Rochester reveals himself as a dangerous performer whose affinity with female subjectivity is not benign but constitutes another, disguised, form of mastery. As Peter Bellis observes, "Rochester's exposure and interrogation of Jane depends upon his assumption of feminine marginality" (645).[8] In his gipsy disguise, Rochester can command a degree of intimacy that he could not attain openly as a man; and he uses this intimacy to achieve a mesmerizing visual power over Jane. In the process, he appropriates Jane's own vision and makes her eye reflect the passivity he desires her to display. He

tells Jane that her eye is "impressionable," that an unconscious lassitude weighs in its lid," --as if affirming that Jane's vision were subject to the same passivity that produces the "automatic portrait."

As long as he is master of Thornfield, Rochester is dangerous to Jane because, despite the resonance between them, he is still committed to a masculine authoritarianism which compels him to objectify her. Rochester's eye remains suspiciously masterful and motivated by a dangerous desire to invade and capture what it sees. Although he values Jane, it is still his program to try to shape her as an entity, to control her visual life, even though he knows the "eye" of her spirit will always elude his grasp.

> "Consider that eye: consider the resolute, wild, free thing looking out of it, defying me. . . . Whatever I do with its cage; I cannot get at it--the savage, beautiful creature! If I tear, if I rend the slight prison, my outrage will only let the captive loose. Conqueror I might be of the house; but the inmate would escape to heaven before I could call myself possessor of its clay dwelling-place." (405)

Despite his sympathy with and love for Jane, despite his own awareness of Jane's elusive subjectivity, Rochester cannot yet transcend the visual structures of the masculine camera that demands a female object of perception. Thus, particularly as the day of their marriage approaches, he becomes more and more peremptory

in his demands that Jane appear as a female object. In fact he offers her a wide range of standard options. He suggests that she be might be an "angel" (327), a "fairy" (337), "Fairfax Rochester's girl bride" (325) or the inmate of his "harem" (339). Even when the secret of Bertha is out, and he realizes that he can no longer marry Jane, Rochester still hopes to possess her by "keeping" her as his mistress--this despite his own statement that "hiring a mistress is the next worst thing to buying a slave" (397-8).

Jane's response is to prefer to remain an undefined being rather than conform to these female norms. As she tells Rochester when he tries to thrust the role of angel upon her, "I had rather be a _thing_ than an angel" (327). Despite their rapport, Jane is not entirely sure that the "ground" of Rochester's perceptions should be her ground as well. In fact, when they are courting, and presumably on intimate terms, Rochester (like Crimsworth) mistakes the colour of her eyes. He refers to her "radiant hazel eyes" while, in an aside, Jane remarks "I had green eyes, reader; but you must excuse the mistake: for him they were new-dyed, I suppose" (325). Jane forgives him (and asks the reader's indulgence), but the slip, emphasized by the appeal to the reader, is significant because it implies not only that his eyes do not really see hers, but that he

wishes her vision to be "coloured" by his own. Until he can acknowledge and accommodate her mode of being, Rochester will remain as tyrannical as Brocklehurst and Mrs. Reed, a circumstance he emphasizes when he tells Jane that, after marriage her "tyranny" will be replaced by his:

> "[I]t is your time now, little tyrant, but it will be mine presently; and when once I have fairly seized you, to have and to hold, I'll just--figuratively speaking--attach you to a chain like this (touching his watch guard)." (341)

Because Rochester is not entirely to be trusted, Jane retreats, as she did at Gateshead, to her "usual place," the window-seat (274). During the dangerous period just before her marriage, Jane constructs the window-seat as a self-defensive space that allows her to interact with Rochester without requiring her to occupy the slavish space he has marked out for her. Overwhelmed by Rochester's overly fond demonstrations of affection, Jane finds the window-seat an appropriate place to prepare her defense against him:

> He rose and came towards me, and I saw his face all kindled, and his full falcon-eye flashing, and tenderness and passion in every lineament. I quailed momentarily--then I rallied. Soft scene, daring demonstration, I would not have; and I stood in peril of both: a weapon of defence must be prepared--I whetted my tongue: as he reached me, I asked with asperity, "whom he was going to marry now?" (343)

Once again, the window-seat functions as a provisional

accommodation that allows Jane to exist as a defensively liminal subjectivity on the margins of a territory controlled by a masterful male subject whose project is to "own" her. But, in this case, her defensive position is also, to some extent, offensive, as her "whetted tongue" implies. Rather than hiding away in her retreat, Jane now uses the window-seat tactically, as a site of intervention against Rochester's too-aggressive advances. In a significant departure from Jane's enthralled passivity which allowed Rochester to insinuate himself into her space of being, Jane's rallying of her powers of resistance suggests a renewed awareness of the selfhood she might be losing and an increasing wariness of the man who may invade her window-seat only in order to appropriate and possess her.

As the invasion and defense of Jane's window-seat enclosure suggests, Thornfield demands a constant monitoring of her own position and perceptions in relation to the theatrical space Rochester controls. To maintain her selfhood and the _camera_ of her being, Jane must continually differentiate and re-differentiate her vision with regard to the "magic lantern" illusions projected by Rochester. At Thornfield, the relatively clear-cut antagonisms of Gateshead and Lowood give way to a more modulated and difficult differentiation of

subjectivities--both male and female. Here, where internal and external, imagined and real become increasingly problematic, Jane resorts to a mode of visualization that is not absolutely framed or grounded, but is based on shifting differentiations and comparisons. Jane's art, which is emphasized most strongly in the Thornfield section of the novel, is particularly reflective of her need and capacity for creative experiments that test and challenge the boundaries of selfhood. Jane's art is very different from Crimsworth's decisively framed portraits and landscapes. The portrait of Rochester, for instance, takes shape almost organically and expresses, however ominously, a complex blurring of subjective boundaries that challenges the subject/object divisions implicit in Crimsworth's Lockean perspectives. In making this "speaking likeness" of Rochester in the camera of the window-seat, Jane inscribes a creative power that can defy the boundaries of internal and external, self and other.

Her visionary paintings, which are even more emphatically the representation of Jane's inner imaginings, are significantly unframed, as if to emphasize the unbounded nature of their subject matter. In these mysterious representations of her own psyche, Jane expresses the same absence of rational coordinates that

she finds at Thornfield, the same unplumbed depths that the bounded camera of the Lockean subject can neither contain nor elucidate. Multiple and mysterious, Jane's inner landscapes are another creative representation of a subjective "reality" that cannot be encompassed within the unifying frame of the rational.[9]

Even when she is attempting to come to terms with the "reality" of her situation, Jane employs a differential mode of representation. Instead of representing reality from a single, stable perspective, Jane chooses to represent the "real" as a matter of stringent differentiation between herself and Blanche Ingram. In an effort to convince herself of the dreary, "unvarnished" (200) "truth" of her position at Thornfield, she requires herself to look in the mirror and take a likeness of that image:

> Place the glass before you, and draw in chalk you own picture, faithfully; without softening one defect: omit no harsh line, smooth away no displeasing irregularity; write under it, 'Portrait of a Governess, disconnected, poor, and plain.' (201)

She then forces herself to compare this self-portrait to an imaginary portrait, a coloured miniature of Blanche Ingram, painted on ivory, which Jane has invested with all the attributes of a beautiful and "accomplished lady of rank." (201-2)[10] This exercise is, for all its emphasis on the "realistic" portrait of the "disconnected poor and

plain" governess, a decidedly non-definitive experiment in self-representation. Jane uses the painting of Blanche, which is entirely the product of her own imagining, to represent the "real" romantic heroine of the affair. She represents herself as the hopelessly plain and poor outcast who can never win Rochester's regard. In the event, the comparison proves to be false; but Jane's comparative portraits do not, in any case, represent a unitary and stable vision of what is "real" and "true." Rather, if we remember that Jane's self-portrait is based on a mirror image, Jane is actually dealing in layers of self-representation that are not clearly "grounded" in objective reality. In place of a definitively framed and stabilized representation, Jane creates a polylogue of comparative selves which she negotiates in her ongoing process of self-discovery and self-articulation.

Jane's art, then, favours a mode of vision that does not align itself absolutely with any one perspective or authoritative mode of representation. Like the liminal, theatrical space of the window-seat, Jane's paintings and drawings can be seen as representations of a mind and eye that work on the margins of aesthetic and cognitive authority. As her art attests, Jane's vision tends to the unframed and plural. Where Crimsworth wishes to frame and unify, Jane crosses boundaries; her eye moves among

multiple modes of vision and representation. Hers is a vision with the capacity to elude and challenge the possessive frame of her perceptual "masters." If Rochester can appropriate her mind and vision for a time, she is not without the resources--as her verbal "swordplay" in the window-seat implies--to finally differentiate his possessive vision from her own.

Ultimately, Jane's visual and visionary resources are critical to her survival at Thornfield because, under Rochester's eye, she is constantly in danger of losing sight of her own vision. When, for instance, Rochester calls on Jane to "forget visionary woes" in favour of "real happiness" (356), he is attempting to delude her into thinking that his vision is real and hers is false. The opposite is the case, of course, as Jane later finds when, freed from Rochester's deceptions, she realizes how "blind" her eyes had been when they were operating in concert with Rochester's (374).

For Jane, Thornfield's "reality" is dangerously theatrical. Throughout her stay there, Rochester attempts to benight Jane in the hope that this perceptual "slavery" will force her to "see" his illusion as reality. Although in seeming affinity with Jane, Rochester creates a theatrical "reality" that is grounded in an exclusivity as inimical to Jane's well-being as the rigidities of Reed,

Brocklehurst and Co. Despite his rapport with Jane and their genuine love for one another, Rochester's position as the masculine "master" of Thornfield, blinds him to the legitimacy and power of Jane's subjectivity. Because he is hampered by his authoritarian blindness, Rochester fails to see how his manipulative conjurings constitute an attempt to cast Jane as an object (however beloved) whose role it is to remain passive within the confines of his masterful will and perceptions. Just as he hopes to efface Bertha by imprisoning her within the territory of his being, Rochester intends to efface Jane's subjectivity by imprisoning her within the obscuring boundaries of his perceptual mastery. As Jane gradually realizes, Rochester's Thornfield is grounded in a "mystery" that resists and excludes her: "All I had gathered from it amounted to this,--that there was a mystery at Thornfield; and that from participation in that mystery, I was purposely excluded" (207).

Confounded by this mystery and the theatrical "reality" Rochester installs in place of reality, Jane is radically alienated from Rochester himself, as she acknowledges when she tells him that his actions and thoughts are beyond the scope of her comprehension:

> "May it be right then," I said. [I] deem[ed] it useless to continue a discourse which was all darkness to me; and, besides, sensible that the character of my interlocutor was beyond my penetration: at least, beyond its present reach;

> and feeling the uncertainty, the vague sense of insecurity, which accompanies a conviction of ignorance. (170)

Until she and Rochester can meet on equal ground (as opposed to the illusory "ground" encompassed by his wilful authority) Jane must remain alienated from him.

Appropriately, it is in the charade scene at Thornfield that the nature of Rochester's wilful theatrics is most tellingly inscribed. Whereas Jane's theatricalization of the red-room was a desperately creative response to her imprisonment, Rochester's posturings are consciously manipulative and represent an extension of his need to control and subjugate. Unable to "grasp" her spirit as he would like, Rochester intends to seduce Jane, as he later admits, by staging a performance that will arouse her jealousy and make her love him. What Rochester enacts is a baffling mixture of reality and illusion that is embodied in the very architecture of his theatrical space. Set in the social spaces of the dining room/drawing room complex, the charade scene overlays the mundane ground of gendered social interaction with an equally gendered social theatrics that Rochester has stage-managed in order to seduce Jane. When the curtained arch between the dining room and the drawing room is transformed into the proscenium arch of theatre, the transformation signals a shift in perceptual "ground" that

destabilizes the idea of the real because it accommodates a subjectively projected reality. In this case, Rochester's self-grounded projections are destructively destabilizing because he seeks to efface the "reality" of Bertha and put in its stead the illusory "reality" of "Fairfax Rochester's girl-bride" (325).

To achieve his seductive virtuality, Rochester calls on yet another female "player," Blanche Ingram, to act as a puppet bride in the marriage "charade" he has conjured up. In treating Blanche as another "object" to be manipulated in the service of his will, Rochester reveals the tyrannical nature of his stage-management. As Jane later suggests when she deplores his use of Blanche, Rochester's complete disregard for Blanche condemns him as a still-"hardened" subject whose space of being cannot accommodate the idea of a female subjectivity. In keeping with his suppression of the imprisoned Bertha and his willingness to sacrifice Jane to the demands of his magisterial desires, Rochester's deployment of Blanche indicates his Bluebeard-like compulsion to destroy the women he "uses," even those women he loves and has loved. As the final lines of the love song to Jane suggest, his is a killing love that destroys the "objects" of his regard: "My Love has sworn, with sealing kiss,/With me to live--to die;/I have at last my nameless bliss:/As I love-

-loved am I!" (343).

Thus Rochester is, as yet, unable to transcend a murderous masculine selfhood that requires him to "hurry" his wives into "suttee" (344). To enact the sacrifice of his three "wives" on the altar of his magisteriality, Rochester presents a charade in which all the female participants are required to take part as dupes. Even Jane (who has refused to act in the charade and remains self-defensively distanced in the window-seat) cannot help functioning as an unwitting participant. Kept in the dark by Rochester's fictive "reality," Jane does not realize that her posture as a distanced observer has been anticipated and incorporated in Rochester's seductive play. Using Blanche as his "dummy" bride, Rochester arouses Jane's jealousy and thereby absorbs her as a participant in this play where she unknowingly enacts the role of his illicit lover.

The charade itself expresses the levels on which his manipulations implicate female subjectivity. In the charade he presents Blanche as his bride, but Blanche, too, is made an unwitting participant who has been seduced by Rochester's performance. Only Rochester knows that the key to the charade, "Bridewell," refers to the hidden mad wife who is the "reality" that underlies and motivates the illusions he is creating. On this "stage" of his own

making, none of these women are allowed a space of being outside the roles he offers. Rochester wants to possess, with impunity, all the subjectivities he wishes to control. Bertha must be a prisoner bride, Blanche a discarded bride, and Jane yet another entrapped bride whose legitimacy depends on the death of Rochester's real wife. In this sense, Rochester's theatrical transformations at Thornfield, which so seductively echo Jane's own theatricalized self, represent dangerously masterful appropriations of female subjectivity. In effect, Rochester's stage-management presents Jane with sights that are designed to make her "see" with his eyes, an object he comes dangerously close to achieving as Jane's desire to see through his eyes at the wedding suggests: "I know not whether the day was fair or foul; in descending the drive, I gazed neither on sky nor earth: my heart was with my eyes; and both seemed migrated into Mr. Rochester's frame" (363).

Because she must navigate a perceptual territory that is not entirely knowable, Jane must fall back, as she realizes, on the paradoxical faculty of occult vision. She is "thrown back on the region of doubts and portents and dark conjectures," a region she goes to some lengths to legitimize later in her narrative:

> Presentiments are strange things! and so are sympathies; and so are signs: and the three combined make one mystery to which humanity has

> not yet found the key. I never laughed at presentiments in my life; because I have had strange ones of my own. Sympathies I believe exist: . . . whose workings baffle mortal comprehension. And signs, for aught we know, may be but the sympathies of Nature with man. (276)

Just as she claims the window-seat within the spaces of Rochester's domain, Jane claims an order of vision that is simultaneously contiguous to yet separate from Rochester's. In the "dream spaces" of her consciousness, she envisions a spectral reality which, like the dark space of the mirror in the red-room, is more "real" than the illusory reality in which Rochester has enfolded her. When she narrates her dream experiences to Rochester, she introduces her subtextual vision into the "text" of his performance. Like the subjective alterities she generates in the "double retirement" of the window-seat at Gateshead, Jane's dreams represent an occult space of being, a site of subjective alterity that allows her to envision a reality more profound than the shadow play which Rochester has conjured up in order to entrap her. The dream-vision which Jane experiences after Rochester's revelations can be seen as an affirmation of Jane's own, visionary "reality." As she looks into the reflective eyes of the moon goddess whose eyes "gazed and gazed" on her (407), Jane is, in effect, seeing her own sight and envisioning the transcendent vision that Rochester's

illusions have eclipsed. Like the mirror- image in the red-room, the self-reflective dream-image acts as a visionary other self who reflectively affirms the pararational "ground" of her female subjectivity.[11] The fact that the vision "pauses in the centre of the ceiling" and causes the roof of Rochester's house to give way to a vision of "clouds, high and dim" (407) suggests, moreover, that such envisioning (which recalls Jane's terrifying but self-expanding visions in the red-room and foreshadows the transcendent, unrestricted space of Lucy Snowe's "Peri-Banou's tent") has the power to transcend the limits of an imprisoning cognitive territory.

In many ways, Jane's oneiric envisioning is in opposition to Rochester's theatrics. While Rochester figures himself and Jane as a united couple, her dream figures them as impossibly distant, with Rochester all the while retreating from her. In fact, in her dream, he becomes a quickly vanishing dot on the horizon: "I saw you like a speck on a white track, lessening every moment" (357). While Rochester attempts to make Thornfield the solid and stable site of their union, Jane dreams of it as a decomposing ruin from which she is falling: "I climbed the thin wall with frantic perilous haste, eager to catch one glimpse of you from the top: the stones rolled from under my feet . . . . " (357). While Rochester figures

her as an entity that he can tie to his watch chain, she figures herself as a doubled being. Always carrying the mysterious, clinging child, she becomes an ambiguity that extends beyond his grasping understanding: "Wrapped up on a shawl, I still carried the unknown little child" (357).[12]

The visionary in Jane Eyre, while it seems figurative, actually emerges as "ground." Rochester himself is forced to acknowledge the mysterious interaction between the visionary and the "real" when he examines Jane's dream painting and discovers that one of them is an accurate representation of a place Jane has never seen: "Where did you see Latmos?--for that is Latmos" (155). Like the oneiric "reality" of her visionary paintings, Jane's dream-life offers her a medium that merges the visionary with the visual "realities" of Lockean cognition and the visual theatrics that Rochester imposes. This interaction of the visual and the visionary is evident in Bertha's gradual emergence from the occult to the visible. At first Rochester masks Bertha behind the mundane reality of Grace Poole with her "pot of porter." At this stage, Bertha is invisible, except for her "disembodied" laugh. However, this invisibility does not prevent her from operating as a powerful visionary subtext, even for Rochester.

Although he attempts to erase her, Rochester finds that, in his imagining, he cannot escape Bertha and is, in fact, as much her prisoner as she is his. When he looks at Thornfield, he envisions it as Bertha's abhorrent, bleak prison:

> "I like Thornfield; . . . its grey facade, and lines of dark windows reflecting that metal welkin: and yet how long have I abhorred the very thought of it; shunned it like a great plague-house! How I do still abhor--" (175).

Looking with the eye of mastery, Rochester should see the site of his authority uncontaminated by female subjectivity; instead, his sight is invaded against his will by the visionary omnipresence of his prisoner. Later, he tells Jane, "you cannot discern that 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" (270). In fact, his very self has been invaded by the "charnel house" that he imagines as Bertha's space of being as he acknowledges when he tells Jane that is own "heart" is "a sort of charnel . . ." (168).

Bertha's occult power is most tellingly inscribed, however, when Rochester walks into the church on his wedding day with his eyes fixed, all the while, on a vision of Bertha--a vision Jane also wishes to see: "I wanted to see the invisible thing on which, as we went

along, he appeared to fasten a glance fierce and fell. I wanted to feel the thoughts whose force he seemed breasting and resisting" (363). The invasive power of Bertha as part of the visionary subtext of Thornfield exerts itself as she invisibly surfaces despite her imprisonment. Although she is meant to be masked behind the image of Grace Poole, Bertha invades Jane's being and leaves enigmatic traces that eventually displace the masquerade veiling Bertha's presence. For instance, when Jane rescues Rochester from his burning bed, she quenches the flames but finds later that she, too, is burning with a strange, interior fire. Despite her intention that "judgment would warn passion," Jane finds she is "too feverish to rest," as if the fire that Bertha has set now burns in her (187-8). Later, when she awaits Rochester while attending Mason, who has been bitten by Bertha, Jane finds her mind invaded by the idea of a monster living within Rochester's house:

> Then my own thoughts worried me. What crime was this, that lived incarnate in this sequestered mansion, and could neither be expelled nor subdued by the owner?--what mystery that broke out, now in fire now in blood, at the deadest hours of the night?--What creature was it, that, masked in an ordinary woman's face and shape, uttered the voice, now of a mocking demon, and anon of a carrion-seeking bird of prey? (264)

Behind the mask of the "ordinary woman," Bertha exists as an occult but powerful presence who has also, by now,

invaded the space of Jane's mind and soul as she has invaded Rochester's.[13]

Suffering from this interprojective contagion, Jane begins to dream scenes in which Bertha is implicated although invisible. For seven nights Jane dreams of a baby phantom who "meet[s]" her the moment she "enter[s] the land of slumber." In this oneiric doubling there is a dynamic of inner extension which suggests the occult presence of Bertha. In Jane's dreams of Rochester, Bertha "appears" as a division or distance between Jane and Rochester, a seeming void that can be interpreted as the "space" occupied by the clinging "phantom child" who burdens Jane and keeps her from joining with Rochester. Displaced by this "phantom" other who is also, mysteriously, an inhabitant of her being, Jane experiences Bertha's dream-presence as a "barrier" that divides her from Rochester (355). However much she may wish to be relieved of the "weight" of the phantom child who "impedes [her] progress" towards Rochester (357), Jane cannot rid herself of this phantom presence any more than Rochester can rid Thornfield of the "monster's" presence. Both Thornfield and Jane are "haunted" by this repressed subjectivity.

This dream haunting, however, surfaces on the "ground" of reality when Jane wakes and sees Bertha, who

has invaded her bedroom and torn Jane's wedding veil as if the act might also tear the "veil" of illusion that has obscured her presence. As Jane tells Rochester during the narration of her dreams, "the thing was real: the transaction actually took place" (359). In affirming the reality of the "transaction" whereby Bertha emerges from spectrality to take her place as Rochester's "bride," Jane also affirms the reality of the subjective, visionary ground where Bertha's presence has always been inscribed in defiance of Rochester's rationalizations. For Jane, the transaction involves a recognition of her own intersubjective connection to the "monstrous" Bertha. In a sequence later echoed by Jane's dream-vision of the moon goddess, Bertha leans over Jane's bed and, in the brief moment before she extinguishes her candle, looks into Jane's face. Jane is so overpowered by this vision that, in the moment she becomes aware of Bertha's "lurid visage flam[ing]" over hers, she loses consciousness for the second time (358). Like the spectral other/self which haunted the space of the red-room, Bertha haunts Jane's bedchamber because, like the mirror self, she is another extended subjectivity whose projective being belongs to Jane's selfhood. When unconsciousness once again "closes" the scene of this "vision," as she calls it, Jane marks her encounter with Bertha as a moment of subjective force

in which the theatre of her subjectivity merges with actuality to displace the false theatrics of Rochester's shadow play.

In these "transactions" among the visionary and the real, Rochester's and Bertha's grounds of being shift. While he is attempting to transform the living Bertha into a spectre, and Jane into his "fairy" bride, he is, himself, becoming ever more spectral in Jane's eyes. As Jane tells him just before she narrates her dreams for him: "I cannot see my prospects clearly tonight, sir . . . . Everything in life seems unreal. . . . You, sir, are the most phantom-like of all: you are a mere dream" (325). By creating his false theatre, Rochester becomes as illusory as the seeming illusion he tries to make of Bertha. Paradoxically, as the spectral and visionary become ever more visible, Rochester becomes the ungrounded being whose vision produces spectres. It is only after he is blinded by the woman he has imprisoned that he can "see" beyond his own will, beyond the stagecraft whereby he produces manipulative visions for the females he wishes to subdue. As he later admits to Jane,

> "I did wrong: I would have sullied my innocent flower--breathed guilt on its purity: the Omnipotent snatched it from me. I, in my stiff-necked rebellion, almost cursed the dispensation: instead of bending to the decree, I defied it. . . . You know I was proud of my strength: but what is it now, when I must give it over to foreign guidance, as a child does its weakness? Of late, Jane--only of late--I began

> to see and acknowledge the hand of God in my doom." (572)

Underlying the cheap illusionism of Rochester's shadow play there exists a profound theatrics where being shapes itself beyond the "interference" of such presumptuous manipulation. For Jane, visionary seeing becomes a means of attuning the I/eye to the "reality" underlying Thornfield. The space of the visionary functions as an alternative but interrelated arena of perception in which the invisible can make itself manifest.

Such inclusivity is marked by Bertha's final emergence into a forcefully tangible reality that Rochester can no longer deny. When Rochester confronts Bertha in her prison, Jane stands at a distance on the threshold of the room. From this position, analagous to the threshold-like space of the window-seat, Jane watches the final "scene" of Rochester's play. But in this scene, which is reminiscent of Jane's struggle with John Reed, Rochester must "close" with the "desperate thing" he has suppressed. Like Jane emerging from the window-seat to grapple with her tyrant, Bertha emerges, finally, from her imprisoning space to confront her oppressor and to appear before Jane as her self. In the shadow play of selves that Rochester has staged at Thornfield, Jane finally sees the prison within the house, the play within the play, the appearance of the necessary other self that affirms her

own, visionary, reality. Rochester, in his attempt to cast Bertha as an other, an object to be obscured by his own magisterial vision, must now realize her as an other self who cannot be denied, just as Jane would not be denied at Gateshead and Lowood.

However antagonistically he "closes" with Bertha, Rochester affirms an association of selves as significant as his connection to Jane. Rochester wishes to make a complete distinction between Jane and Bertha, as if Bertha's fiery eyes could have no "kinship" with Jane's: "Compare these clear eyes with the red balls yonder--this face with that mask--this form with that bulk . . . " (371). But, as the mirror episode in Jane's bedroom affirms, there _is_ a kinship. If the mirror image of Bertha wearing the veil associates her with Jane, Rochester's other bride, Bertha's eyes might well be a reflection of Jane's own. Also suggestive is the fact that, when Bertha looks down upon Jane as she lies in her bed, she appears as a nightmarish version of the beneficent goddess who also looks over Jane in her dream. These doublings and specular associations suggest that, for all their seeming incompatibility, the "red balls" of Bertha's eyes are akin to the cool clarity of Jane's own; and, however "cool" she seems in this instance, we know that Jane, too, is capable of burning with passion.

In her emergence from beneath the "cover" of Rochester's vision, Bertha can no longer be alienated or objectified as other. She, too, is another self, however much Rochester may wish to deny it. Like the mysterious dream child that Jane cannot discard, Bertha is a spectral self who cannot be erased because she,too, belongs to the same "ground" of subjectivity, a connection Rochester admits when he tells Jane, "Concealing the mad-woman's neighbourhood from you . . . was something like covering a child with a cloak, and laying it down near a upas-tree" (305). Thus, as Jane stands on the threshold of Bertha's _camera_/prison, it is as if she also stands on the threshold of her own space of being, watching an enactment of the subjective interplay that has also shaped her self.

It is at this moment, when Jane watches the realization of her visionary experiences, that Jane rejects Rochester's "play" (which he wishes to continue by casting her as his mistress). By refusing to collude in Bertha's oppression and by accepting Bertha as Rochester's true bride, Jane grants Bertha a selfhood that, however deformed, is her right. By leaving Rochester, Jane also refuses to inhabit the "ground" of his magisterial space where she would have no "medium" of being except as an illegitimate being. Instead, Jane chooses to step out of those spaces that have shaped her as other, and sets her

foot on a transcendent "ground" that, however painful, will free her from the blinding constraints of Rochester's mastery. As she tells Rochester when he asks, "Who in the world cares for you?"

> "I care for myself. The more solitary, the more friendless, the more unsustained I am, the more I will respect myself. I will keep the law given by God; sanctioned by man. I will hold to the principles received by me when I was sane and not mad--as I am now. Laws and principles are not for the times when there is no temptation: they are for such moments as this, when body and soul rise in mutiny against their rigour: stringent are they; inviolate they shall be. . . . Preconceived opinions, foregone determinations, are all I have at this hour to stand by; there I plant my foot." (404)

By stepping out of the subject/object spaces of male hegemony, Jane opens a frighteningly new territory. In the open, undefined territory of the moors, she encounters nothing but brute necessity and transcendent grace. Here, where all houses are closed to her, her space of being is radically unhoused and out of "cover," grounded only in her self's animating spirit. When she follows the "ignis fatuus" (422) she is following the trace of this spirit which rescues her and brings her to Marsh End, the "end" of her lost wandering, where she finds housing for her almost expiring body. A scandalously unprotected female, she finds a sheltering space where the medium of her self might emerge out of invisibility into incarnation.

Significantly, Marsh End first appears as much a

shadow play as Rochester's playacting at Thornfield. Jane finds the source of the light that has guided her when she kneels before a little kitchen window and looks in at a scene that appears before her like a little magic lantern show: "This scene was as silent as if all the figures had been shadows, and the fire-lit apartment a picture: so hushed was it . . . " (424). In complete opposition to the grandeur of Thornfield, this small kitchen space is eminently suitable for a small, plain woman who has rejected the grand, false roles assigned her by Rochester. It is a world aligned with her being. As if to affirm this fact, she is allowed in and finds herself at the centre of a scene where, for the first time, she is not under threat of annihilation. Whereas at Thornfield she would not enter the stage of Rochester's vision, here she does enter the scene: "Presently I stood within that clean, bright kitchen--in the very hearth . . . " (429). But conditions are quite different The people she sees are sisters, truly kin to her: "I had nowhere seen such faces as theirs: and yet, as I gazed on them, I seemed intimate with every lineament" (424). "Our natures dovetailed: mutual affection--of the strongest kind--was the result" (447).

Like Bertha, Jane gradually emerges from spectrality into reality and takes on flesh as her initial, ghost-like

appearance gives way to a healthier fleshiness. At Marsh End, her subjectivity finally begins to take on reality. Here Jane's spectral subjectivity, her self-defensive ability to create subjective alterities, is no longer effaced and perverted as the false subjectivity of the actress. Instead such self-extension is legitimated in the true kinship (which also includes the kinship of blood) that she finds in Mary and Diana. "You three, then, are my cousins: half our blood on each side flows from the same source?" (491). At Marsh End, she finds a space where male hegemony is not absolute and the female self is not entirely regulated into the reflective completion of a male I/eye. In fact, when Jane receives her inheritance and decides to share it among the Rivers family, she feels that she has truly found her "medium," a place were she experiences both kinship and economic equality. Before the advent of this economic independence, her life appeared to her as an amorphous lump. With her newfound wealth, she feels she can give it shape: "Circumstances knit themselves, fitted themselves, shot into order: the chain that had been lying hitherto a formless lump of links, was drawn out straight,--every ring was perfect, the connection complete" (490).

In celebration of this new-found sense of belonging, one of her first acts is to renew the house itself, an act

symbolic of her own coming-into-being which takes place, significantly, at Christmas time (497). When she tells the unenthusiastic St. John that she plans to do a complete "clean down" of the house (498), this ceremonial cleansing is as much in honour of her own homecoming as it is a celebration of Diana's and Mary's release from their "servitude" as governesses. Carefully preserving the possessions cherished by the Rivers family, she also adds and amends, thoughtfully but definitively inscribing the signs of her own presence throughout the house:

> The ordinary sitting-room and bedrooms I left much as they were; for I knew Diana and Mary would derive more pleasure from seeing again the old homely tables, and chairs, and beds, than from the spectacle of the smartest innovations. Still some novelty was necessary, to give their return the piquancy with which I wished it to be invested. Dark handsome new carpets and curtains, an arrangement of some carefully selected antique ornaments in porcelain and bronze, new coverings and mirrors, and dressing-cases for the toilet tables, answered the end: they looked fresh without being glaring. A spare parlour and bed-room I refurnished entirely, with old mahogany and crimson upholstery: I laid canvass on the passage, and carpets on the stairs. (500)

No longer alienated and confined to the shadowy site of the window-seat, Jane has become an extended entity, a subject capable of absorbing and being absorbed by the space of those other selves who are "kin" to her. In "retransforming" Moor House, Jane also creates for herself a _camera_ in which she can function as the creative agent

who "sets the scene."

In this transfiguration, during which Jane shifts from a liminal to a central position, St. John's masculine authority appears less than complete, as is evident when he "escape[s]" from the "vivacity" of the celebrating womenfolk around him (504). The power of this "sisterly society" (499), which Jane has now joined as a central figure, is also apparent in the attitude of Mary and Diana. Whereas the females at Lowood were forced to laugh at Brocklehurst behind his back, such mockery is much more open and easy at Marsh End. Diana and Mary do not hesitate to point out St. John's failings, and are ready to align themselves with Jane against his magisterial arrogation of Jane's selfhood. For instance, they tell Jane that St. John is implacable and hard and that his desire to take her to India as his bride is unwarranted. "You are much too pretty, as well as too good, to be grilled alive at Calcutta" (530). Like Rochester, St. John would like to "hurry Jane into suttee" but, unlike Rochester, who is able to dupe and manipulate the females in his house, St. John must contend with two clear-eyed women, neither of whom wishes Jane to immolate herself on the altar of his male arrogance. In this household, Jane rediscovers sympathetic female subjects who refuse to endorse St. John's idea of himself as the master of the house--and of

Jane.

In St. John, then, Jane finds a male subject whose magisterial powers are informed and modified by the requirements of a strong female presence where all are granted "the privilege of free action" (540). At Moor House, significantly, it is St. John who occupies the window-seat. As Jane observes in her description of the house: "I ventured to approach the window-recess--which his table, chair, and desk consecrated as a kind of study" (450). Here the window-seat is "consecrated" as a Lockean space, a sacrosanct <u>camera</u>/study appropriated to the purposes of St. John who is, as he himself says, a man dedicated to "Reason, not feeling" (478). However, in this house, the <u>camera</u> is a male retreat and sanctuary in an emphatically female household. At Marsh End, the space of male authority is contextualized in relation to a domestic, female space. Here masculine hegemony is patently not absolute. Instead, in this spatial reversal, the <u>camera</u> of male cognition is contextualized as a liminal, penetrable space where the authoritative male subject might be interrogated or "called out," as Jane was called out from her window-seat at Gateshead and Thornfield. Just as the renewed space of Jane's new-found home surrounds St. John's now liminal <u>camera</u>, Jane's assessment of St. John, which is critical of his hard,

magisterial posture, implies that she has achieved a degree of comprehension of the male subject that can challenge its monolithic authority:

> St. John was a good man; but I began to feel he had spoken truth of himself, when he said he was hard and cold. The humanities and amenities of life had no attraction for him--its peaceful enjoyments no charm. Literally, he lived only to aspire--after what was good and great, certainly: but still he would never rest; nor approve of others resting around him. As I looked at his lofty forehead, still and pale as a white stone--at his lineaments fixed in study--I comprehended all at once that he would hardly make a good husband: that it would be a trying thing to be his wife. . . . I saw he was of the material from which nature hews her heroes--Christian and Pagan--her lawgivers, her statesmen, her conquerors: a steadfast bulwark for great interests to rest upon; but, at the fireside, too often a cold cumbrous column, gloomy and out of place. (501-2)

This reversal of spatial/cognitive authority is also articulated visually as a mutuality of observation in which Jane is St. John's equal. She can, as she realizes, penetrate the "mask" of St. John's masterful reserve:

> He had not imagined that a woman would dare to speak so to a man. For me, I felt at home in this sort of discourse. I could never rest in communication with strong, discreet, and refined minds, whether male or female, till I had passed the outworks of conventional reserve, and crossed the threshold of confidence, and won a place by their heart's very hearthstone. (478)

St. John himself admits to Jane, "You <u>are</u> original . . . and not timid. There is something brave in your spirit as well as penetrating in your eye" (478). Deploying this insightful vision that can now circumvent the power of

masculine vision, Jane is able to "see" St. John clearly for what he is: "I saw his fallibilities: I comprehended them. I understood that, sitting there where I did, on the bank of heath, and with that handsome form before me, I sat at the feet of a man, erring as I" (519). No longer blinded by an "eclipsing" male vision as she was by Rochester's, Jane can "comprehend" St. John's character. Moreover, Jane realizes that, although he strives to appear as a self-denying Christian, St. John is, like Rochester, a man who wishes to shape her being and to "colour" her vision in accordance with his own:

> He wanted to train me to an elevation I could never reach . . . . The thing was as impossible as to mould my irregular features to his correct and classic pattern, to give to my changeable green eyes the sea blue tint and solemn lustre of his own. (509)

Although St. John still constitutes a threat (as she will soon discover), Jane is able to construct the mastery he exerts over himself and others as something comprehensible and penetrable--something akin to her own inner "tyranny":

> I was sure St. John Rivers--pure-lived, conscientious, zealous as he was--had not yet found that peace of God which passeth all understanding: he had no more found it, I thought, than had I; with my concealed and racking regrets for my broken idol and lost elysium--regrets to which I have latterly avoided referring; but which possessed me and tyrannized over me ruthlessly. (449-50)

In contrast to her relationship with her other "masters,"

Jane's relationship with St.John is one that demonstrates her capacity to penetrate and understand his psychic territory. Unlike Rochester's Thornfield, which she could neither measure nor fathom, Moor House and its masculine occupant are within Jane's grasp. If, like Crimsworth, St. John tends to keep his visor down, he cannot armour himself against Jane's penetrative insight. In the camera of Moor House, St. John's magisterial position is challenged by Jane's understanding of what lies behind his posture of saintlike superiority.

Yet, just as she could emerge from her window-seat to "close" with her oppressors, St. John is also capable of "closing" dangerously with Jane. Although she constructs him as a masculine subject over whom she has some control, St. John is still very dangerous because, as he tells her, his "impassioned" will also connects him to her:

> "I am sure you cannot long be content to pass your leisure in solitude, and to devote your working hours to a monotonous labour wholly void of stimulus; any more than I can be content . . . to live here buried in morass, pent in with mountain . . . . " (454)[14]

Because he is another self, Jane is not able to efface St. John any more than Rochester could efface Bertha; nor can she confine him to the marginal space to which she has consigned him. Like Rochester, who (in his gipsy disguise) uses the marginality of female being against

Jane, St. John uses the window-seat as a site of power that can still entrap Jane. Looking at St. John in the window-seat, Jane finds herself "under the influence of that ever-watchful blue eye" which "had been searching me through and through, and over and over." His eye was "so keen . . . and yet so cold" that Jane feels "for the moment superstitious--as if I were sitting in the room with something uncanny" (507). Here is the ghost of male perceptual authority turned on Jane with a vengeance.

Appropriating Jane as his pupil and prospective helpmate, St. John begins to exert his mastery over Jane. Not only does he call on his will to suppress all feeling in favour of reason, but he employs his implacable sense of spiritual vocation as the transcendent force with which he plans to master Jane. He tells Jane, when she defies him and refuses to be his wife, "it is not me you deny, but God" (522), and further warns her that she will be "numbered with those who have denied the faith and are worse than infidels" (522). In St. John, although it appears in Christian form, Jane witnesses all the sublime arrogance of the masculine will to power. As Bock observes, Jane resists St. John's zeal only to soften towards him later as he reads from the Bible. Now Jane is "moved to silent awe by St. John's eloquence" (Bock 97). Taking advantage of her susceptibility, St. John "renews

his marriage offer in words 'spoken earnestly, mildly' and in a 'sublime' manner calculated to 'subdue and rule'" (Bock 97).[15] Manifesting the sublime power of the masculine creator and Creator, St. John seems to reinvest the window-seat with all the authority of its Lockean inheritance.

However, just when St. John's power seems at its height, Jane's own powers "come into play." Echoing the earlier, moon-flooded dream scene at Thornfield, in which she envisions the moon as a goddess who validates <u>her</u> vision, the scene of Jane's empowerment is flooded with moonlight. At this moment, in a transcendent dimension where the antagonistic conventions of rationalized vision are rendered irrelevant, Jane's being is affirmed by Rochester's disembodied voice. "Placed in communication" with Rochester on a non-visual plane that does not require the gendered performance of vision, Jane is also freed from the imprisonment of St. John's wilful gaze. Cast against this dimensionless "space," the space of St. John's dominance seems small, paltry and dim, as the candle-lit parlour seems dimmed by the radiance of the moon. Here, Jane is connected to a space that accommodates a more transcendent and comprehensive enlightenment than St. John can encompass: "I seemed to penetrate very near a Mighty Spirit; and my soul rushed out in gratitude at His

feet. I rose from the thanksgiving--took a resolve--and lay down, unscared, enlightened--eager but for the daylight" (537). Like the oneiric, non-rational mode of cognition that surfaces at Thornfield, this sense of boundless, nonentical spirituality that surfaces in Jane allows her to "see" beyond the confines of the cognitive territory in which St. John has trapped her.

Then, as if to affirm the "reality" of this non-rational power, Jane witnesses the realization of yet another dream when she runs back to Rochester to find that Thornfield is, indeed, a ruin. The bastion of Rochester's authority, Thornfield has become a "spectacle of desolation" (544). The theatre of Rochester's authoritative illusionism is gone, and the place where his charade was performed has become a "blackened ruin" that remains like a monument to his dead shadow play. Just as Jane's moment of transcendence effaced the controlling boundaries of St. John's will, the oneiric power of Jane's dream-life seems to have overtaken the territory of Rochester's illusionistic mastery.

Rochester, now "stone blind," a mere "fixture" (547), is, like St. John in the window-seat, a broken monolith consigned to a space that is no longer impressively authoritative. An old building of "moderate size" and "no architectural pretensions," set in an "ineligible and

insalubrious site" (550), Ferndean is a place of enclosure and self-effacement. In common with St. John, the "cumbrous column," the Rochester of Ferndean is a broken monument, the sightless, truncated ruin of a man whose magisterial power has been crippled and subdued. Like the windowless ruin of Thornfield itself, Rochester can no longer use the imprisoning power of his eyes. Through the injuries he sustains when he releases Bertha from her cell to fall to a fiery death, Rochester ironically shares her experience. Burned, crippled, imprisoned in his own house and close to madness, Rochester embodies, in his ruined self, the repudiated female subjectivity he has attempted to erase. In this house, which he ironically and mercifully considered too "insalubrious" for Bertha, Rochester finds a camera/prison where his blind eye can command nothing but obscurity. Now enduring the very imprisoning blindness that, as a masculine subject, he had imposed on the female "objects" of his vision, Rochester has become the suffering inhabitant of a space of being where vision and authority are no longer his to command.

However, in his case, Jane's redemptive theatrics comes into play. Not only does he eventually regain some of his sight; his very blindness is a necessary void, a retransformative emptiness that prepares him for a new mode of being. In this new space, Rochester must

reconstruct himself as a more complex, multi-sensory being who can no longer claim a magisterial subjectivity by virtue of his objectifying sight. A blind inhabitant of Bertha's would-be prison, Rochester undergoes a retransformation that aligns him less with the authority of the male subject and more with the nonentical ambiguity of the metamorphic female subject. As Jane notices, the "shape" that emerges from the door of Ferndean (551) proves to be Rochester in the process of metamorphosis. Jane observes that he is not only capable of metamorphosis, but requires further reshaping to transform him into a human being: "It is time some one undertook to re-humanize you . . . for I see you are being metamorphosed into a lion, or something of that sort" (558). Without vision, Rochester is literally put in touch with a being he could not see with the eye of rationalist vision. In his blindness, he can feel "the living Jane" (555). Unable to resume the hegemony of the masculine eye, Rochester is forced to find other means of perception for his "idea" of the external other. Unable to see Jane, he is thankful to "hear and feel" her (559). In an ironic reversal of his attempt to force Jane to see with his eyes, Rochester is now entirely dependent on Jane's vision. Whereas at Thornfield it was he who was placed in the position that "favoured observation," now it

is Jane who has the power to see while remaining unseen: "I stayed my step, almost my breath, and stood to watch him--to examine him, myself unseen, and alas! to him invisible" (551). However, as her dismay at the loss of his sight suggests, she is not set on the same kind of dominance she found in her male "masters." Instead, Jane undertakes the reshaping of Rochester's sight in a spirit which resists the authoritarian visualization of the masculine observer. In place of the objectifying eye of the male beholder whose rationalized sight requires objects of vision, Jane's eye shapes a mutuality of subjectivities in which the other is constructed, not as an alien other but as another self:

> Literally, I was (what he often called me) the apple of his eye. He saw nature--he saw books through me; and never did I weary of gazing for his behalf, and of putting into words the effect of field, tree, town river, cloud, sunbeam--of the landscape before us; of the weather round us--and impressing by sound on his ear what light could no longer stamp on his eye. (577)

The vision she describes for herself and for Rochester is a symbiotic seeing in which the eye becomes a space where self and other are elided in a process of mutual, multisensory interprojection. As the "apple" of Rochester's eye, Jane is simultaneously subject and object of his seeing. She is constituted now as another self who is an integral part of that seeing. Jane's new relationship with Rochester has created a complex being

whose complex seeing integrates the self, eye and alterity.

The accommodation of Jane's subjectivity also requires a reshaping of the space of being. Rochester's idea of accommodation for Jane was to "chain" her to his bosom, to demand that her life be absorbed in his. Unable to exist in the paradigmatic spaces reserved for her, Jane's reliance on a transcendent power whose mastery does not require another's subjugation has helped her to "realize" a new space of being. Released from servitude on this "higher" ground, Jane is now able to propose a change in the space of being she must occupy in the "sublunar" world. If she cannot live in Rochester's house, she can envisage a place for herself that is contiguous and equal: "If you won't let me live with you, I can build a house of my own close up to your door, and you may come and sit in my parlour when you want company of an evening" (556). "I am my own mistress," she announces. (556) Jane is now the owner of her own house, the mistress of her own self which she chooses to place "in communication with" another self. In contrast to John Reed whose emphatic materialism has proved as ephemeral as his name, Jane is no longer consigned to the spectral space of the outcast alien. As she tells Rochester, she is not "a corpse" or "vacant air" (555), she is a woman in

full possession of her powers and faculties: a "living" woman in her chosen space of being.

As for St. John, whose ending also ends Jane's self-narration, he, like Rochester, embodies the fate of the woman he wished to "chain" to his own purposes. Immolated in a suttee of his own making, St. John quickly dies of his own missionary zeal. Unable to incorporate any other self but God, St. John is a masculine subject in extremity. By excluding himself completely from the kinship of the other, St. John consigns himself to a permanently transcendent ground that is as unaccommodating to human life as the "golden" moor where Jane found herself _in extremis_. In a manner reminiscent of Crimsworth, who ironically extinguishes himself when he closes his narrative, St. John extinguishes himself in his striving for an entirely transcendent subjectivity.

As he drives himself towards death, it is difficult to avoid the suspicion that St. John's Christian motives are as ruthlessly uncharitable and sadistic as Brocklehurst's when that pillar of rectitude declares to Miss Temple "Madam . .. I have a Master to serve whose kingdom is not of this world: my mission is to mortify in these girls the lusts of the flesh" (74). In Jane's catalogue of St. John's virtues and ambitions, mercy and compassion are notably absent; and we are left to wonder

if St. John is not just another manifestation of an authoritarian subject who, like Brocklehurst, cannot tolerate any defiance of his transcendence. Jane's description of St. John, in which he features as a "master spirit" who is one of God's "chosen," hints at an "ambition" that approaches this degree of arrogance:

> His is the ambition of the high master-spirit which aims to fill a place in the first rank of those who are redeemed from the earth--who stand without fault before the throne of God, who share the last might victories of the lamb; who are called, and chosen, and faithful. (578)

Here there is no room for accommodation or transformation--just absolute ascendance and communion with God. Like the subject <u>in camera</u> whose eye/I is analagous to God's, St. John's spiritual sublimation belongs to an exclusive, authoritarian paternalism that is "blind" to other forms of being. As Jane says of him:

> He is a good and a great man: but he forgets, pitilessly, the feelings and claims of little people, in pursuing his own large views. It is better, therefore, for the insignificant to keep out of his way; lest, in his progress, he should trample them down. (531)

St. John's ending is thus in strong contrast to Jane's "beginning" with Rochester at Ferndean, where the "large view" is replaced by a more complex interrelation of vision in which the female eye/I is validated as a source of cognitive and spiritual truth. But the very fact that St. John's seemingly transcendent and transcending

vision is enacted on the "stage" of Jane's narration suggests that there is another authority at work. Although he seems to have the last word in her narrative, Jane's inclusion of St. John's apotheosis is, in effect, a subversion of the God-like perspective St. John espouses. By breaking in on the "final" scene of her union with Rochester with the second ending of St. John's story, Jane introduces an inconclusive element that resists absolute closure, and contextualizes St. John as another self whose "large view" is underwritten by Jane's own creative vision.

In common with Thackeray who more openly identifies himself as the "puppet master" of Vanity Fair,[16] Jane authorizes herself as the creator of the "scenes" in her story. If St. John appears as the closing "master-spirit" of Jane's self-narration, it is by virtue of a theatrical I/eye that can contextualize his "large vision" as a scene within the larger drama of her own metamorphic self-creation. In this doubled ending, with its inclusion of her antagonistic other self, Jane's narrative affirms a theatricality that resists cohesion and closure. In this affirmation of subjective complexity, we see the emergence of an eye/I that will find its most radical articulation in Villette, where Brontë constructs Lucy Snowe's

narration as an irreducibly theatrical creation of female selfhood.

Chapter VI

"Lucy Snowe is a _tatterbox!_": The Anti-Ontological Theatrics of _Villette_

In _Jane Eyre_, Brontë suggests that the subjective interprojections of the theatrical self can lead to a symbiotic accommodation of male and female subjectivity, and that the liminality of the female self, represented by the window-seat, can be transmuted into a shared _camera_ of selfhood. In _Villette_, however, Brontë presents a narrative of discomfiture that refuses the accommodations of even a "retransformed" Lockeanism. In Lucy Snowe we find a female narrator whose heretical, recalcitrant narrative determinedly "tatters" the _camera_ of the unitary Lockean subject and presents the ontology of the female self as an irreducibly complex and often painful theatrics of self-creation. While she begins by assuming the posture of a rational subject, Lucy ends by refusing to cohere as a comprehensible entity.

Even more than Jane, Lucy is suspicious of the naturalized paradigms of self-structure, more aware of the perils of masculine culture for an emergent female subjectivity attempting to find a place in a perceptually and conceptually hostile world. For this reason, Lucy's

narrative is closer to the desperate negotiations of Crimsworth, who is also attempting to achieve subjective authority in an antagonistic environment.

While Crimsworth unwittingly illuminates the absurdities of that authority in his final, self-defeating closure, Lucy directs her desperation more knowingly against the monolithic structures in which she is embedded. Whereas Crimsworth sets out to write a narrative of authority, Lucy's narrative addresses itself to the very problematic of that authority. Lucy attempts to illuminate and challenge the hegemonic cognitive structures of male authority that prevent her from manifesting herself, even in her own narrative consciousness, as a unitary subject. Villette articulates, in its shifts and incohesions, the movement of an elusive female consciousness that simultaneously inhabits and interrogates the imprisoning structures of a masculine cognitive order that seeks to control the parameters of the female psyche.

Although she is at least as defensive as Crimsworth and adopts many of his strategies, Lucy's self-construction does not end in the self-destroying truncation of frustrated authority. It ends, rather, in an ambiguity that knowingly gestures back to the complex processes of self-creation and of narrative creation

itself, to the virtual medium in which the female self is structured--and deconstructed. Unlike Crimsworth, who invests unquestioningly in the frameworks of masculine authority, Lucy manifests herself in an ambiguity that does not submit to the monolithic closures of the rationalized subject. It is this resistant ambiguity, this affirmation of incomprehensibility, that Lucy deploys against the perceptual and conceptual structures that confine and define her. In this chapter we will see how Villette, although it validates the "romance" of a subjective theatrics that transcends and disrupts the structures of seeing, knowing and being, also acknowledges the alienating pressures of lived experience and its resistance to the "staging" of female subjectivity.

Throughout Villette, Lucy calls on the idea of theatre as the locus of this strategic disunity. Whereas in Jane Eyre, theatre remains private and enclosed within the domain of the domestic, in Villette, theatre is integral to the culture, society and religion of Labassecour. In Villette, theatre functions doubly as a mode complicit with the structures of male authority and as a means of disturbing and resisting those structures. While Lucy Snowe's narration articulates the resistant theatrics of a heretical female subject, it also acknowledges the male-empowering structures of female self-performance within

and against which Lucy is operating. In Villette, which is also the "house of Lucy's consciousness" (Tanner 14), theatre informs every aspect of society to reproduce and maintain the gendered protocols of self-construction which Lucy attempts to evade and resist. This complicit theatrics, which operates as a defining feature both of Lucy's external world and her own, inner life, constantly threatens her with its codified and codifying structures. In the normalized performances of the women around her, and in the self-enactments through which she herself attempts to appropriate the postures of male authority, Lucy demonstrates the power of the naturalized enactments that underwrite the authority of Villette's male-oriented society and culture.

One of the most important of these actresses, as we have already seen (see Ch. II), is Paulina Home whose self-enactments function as reflective completions of Graham Bretton's regard. Also significant, particularly in relation to Villette's modifications of the female theatrics in Jane Eyre, is the fact that Polly is a window-seat occupant whose presence there is compliant rather than rebellious. At the house in Bretton, where Lucy first meets Polly, she discovers her "seated, like a little Odalisque, on a couch half shaded by the drooping draperies of the window nearby." Surrounded by "all her

appliances for occupation," the materials she has "collected for conversion into doll-millinery," Polly's "eyes" are "engaged with a picture-book, which lay open on her lap" (35). Whereas Jane's window-seat is the site of an intensely rebellious and creative being, Polly's window- seat is described as a couch for an "Odalisque" whose interests are engaged as much by the millinery for her doll as by the illustrated book about "distant countries" (36). Foreshadowing that other Odalisque, the Cleopatra, Polly is presented here as a far more compliantly integrated female child than the alienated Jane, and her passive occupation of the window-seat suggests that this liminal female space, so potent in Jane Eyre, is no defense against the normalized theatrics of feminine self-performance in Villette. With the "little Odalisque" placed in the window-seat, the space of the female self is reinscribed as a disempowering marginality, the site of a self-performer whose integration with her male "master" is based, not on an equalizing symbiosis, but on her compliant absorption into the structures of masculine hegemony. When, a short time before Polly's marriage to Graham, Lucy observes her sitting between her father and her future husband, she watches as Polly weaves strands of her husband's, her father's and her own hair into an amulet which symbolizes their "mutual concord."

All Polly's life and happiness is now bound up in these two men: "From them she drew her happiness, and what she borrowed, she, with interest gave back" (545-6). Here Polly is absorbed in a symbiosis that is not subversive but smoothly and unquestioningly complicit with the self-effacing conditions of domestic female "destiny."[1]

As Polly's willing integration with her surrounding male guardians suggests, the space of female being in Villette tends to be a site of collusion--not of sanctuary and rebellion. The social theatre of Villette is accommodating only to those female actresses who are willing to work within the structures that entrap them. Certainly this complicity is true of Madame Beck, whose pensionnat (where there is no corner of retreat) reflects and perpetuates the authoritative space and operations of the masculine eye/I. A consummate actress and masterful manipulator, Madame Beck is a highly successful "operator" of the gendered mechanisms that rule Labasscourean society. A woman who "prospered all the days of her life" (547), Madame Beck is also a female whose collusions smooth the path of her life and cause no disruptions in the masculine regime she endorses.

Whereas Polly is the quintessentially domestic woman, Madame Beck, a "Minos in petticoats" (88), is a successful business-woman whose power derives from the appropriation

of a masculine optics which she employs to subjugate the females in her pensionnat. Like the observer in the Panopticon, Madame Beck keeps invisible watch over the females who are imprisoned within the cognitive regime she represents and perpetuates.[2] A place of many rooms and spying apertures where there is "no room for retirement" (89), the pensionnat is a domain entirely ruled by this directress whose unseen surveillance penetrates into even the most private space, as Lucy realizes on her first night at the school when she watches Madame Beck secretly inspecting, as a matter of course, "every article" Lucy owns--not excepting a close look at Lucy's face and the hair under her cap (84-5). Going quietly about her spying with a "face of stone," Madame Beck (a more able version of Mrs. Reed and Brocklehurst) is an observer whose eye and stony countenance betray her "immutable purpose": an implacable intention to control and master those "objects" within the grasp of her vision (85). As Lucy tells us, Madame has "high administrative powers" (88). Without "any symptom of undue excitement" she deals with the complex operation of running her school, "managing and regulating this mass of machinery" by means of observation alone: "'Surveillance,' 'espionage,'--these were her watchwords" (89).

The territory Madame Beck rules is representative and

reflective of her self. Like the Lockean spaces she inhabits and directs, Madame Beck is a controlled and controlling being whose "passionless" nature (91), and "peaceful yet watchful eye" (88) exemplify the qualities of a detached and rational observer. A complete "little bourgeoise," as well as a masterful regulator of the "machinery" of her school, Madame Beck is an exemplary rationalist and materialist whose interests and establishment mesh well with the ruling, middle-class masculine order of Villette.

As Lucy tells us, "interest was the master-key of madame's nature--the mainspring of her motives--the alpha and omega of her life" (90). Unconcerned with anything but the smooth and lucrative operation of her school, Madame Beck produces female students whose self-abasing docility (and complete disregard for the development of their minds) admirably suits the desires and expectations of a male-dominated culture:[3]

> They would riot for three additional lines to a lesson; but I never knew them to rebel against a wound given to their self-respect: the little they had of that quality was trained to be crushed, and it rather liked the pressure of a firm heel than otherwise. (102)

Guided by the watchful eye of Madame Beck, these female students "study" to become passive female objects destined to be presented to the gaze of men. The "fete" (in honour of Madame Beck's birthday) which concludes the school

year, is not so much a celebration of scholastic achievement as a display of female pulchritude before an admiring audience of men. Like would-be brides in their "transparent" white dresses (161), the girls, after spending hours at "ablutions, arrayings and bedizenings," appear before a group of young men who have been invited by Madame Beck to add a "piquant ingredient to the entertainment" (177). Like a respectable procuress, Madame Beck ensures that her girls appear to their advantage--and hers[4]--before the voyeuristic males whose presence is a precursor to the more comprehensive and confining gaze of the male world the girls will shortly be entering.

Although Ginevra Fanshawe is English, she is one of Madame Beck's most accomplished and successful pupils. Interested only in her effect on her male audience, she is obsessed with obtaining the clothes, jewels and accessories with which to "bedizen" herself. On the night of the fête she calls on Lucy to look with her in the mirror. Absorbed by her own image, which is her greatest asset, Ginevra unconsciously indicts the "education" she has received at the <u>pensionnat</u> by affirming the feminine "accomplishments" she has learned to value: "I have had a continental education, and though I can't spell, I have abundant accomplishments. I <u>am</u> pretty; <u>you</u> can't deny

that; I may have as many admirers as I choose" (179). Ginevra's education has left her mind untouched and has merely polished those talents and features that make her desirable to men.

Like Madame Beck and her students, Ginevra has adapted herself to a system in which women must become either collusive operators or desirable objects. Motivated by self-interest, they intend to substantiate themselves through the material benefits which a male-defined bourgeois culture permits its cooperative females. As Tony Tanner notes, Ginevra, like Madame Beck, is a complete bourgeoise whose one aim is to get her "portion" (593), an enterprise she succeeds in when she marries de Hamal and receives a dowry from her uncle (594) (see Tanner 18). It is a characteristic that Lucy also affirms when she hears of Ginevra's financial success:

> Ginevra ever stuck to the substantial; I always thought that there was a good trading element in her composition, much as she scorned the "bourgeoisie." (594)

However, Madame Beck and Ginevra, like Polly, are female actresses whose performances hide an essential emptiness. Tanner, who connects Madame Beck's house with Ginevra's character, remarks on the void at the centre of both. As "mechanistic" and cold as Ginevra's self-interested manoeuvres, Madame Beck's "system works but it is a 'hollow system,' just as Ginevra is satiated but

empty" (Tanner 18). The Panoptic camera of female power, as represented by the machine of Madame Beck's pensionnnat, is a site of female subservience that operates under the guise of material success. What such female substantiation really means is objectification and ownership within the camera of a more powerful and comprehensive male authority.

As collusive actresses, Polly, Ginevra and Madame Beck forfeit selfhood in order to become masqueraders on the stage of a male regime. Lucy, pointing out this essential lack, says of Madame Beck, "her habitual disguise, her mask and her domino, were to me a mere network reticulated with holes . . . " (560). Like Polly, the little performer whose selfhood is absorbed by her husband and father, and Ginevra, whose flirtatious acting is a façade that hides a "poor creature" (179), Madame Beck is an actress whose performance of power disguises a profound loss of self.

This is not to say that Lucy is entirely exempt from such performances herself. Particularly in the early sections of her narrative, as she explores the parameters of selfhood available to her, she tends to adopt the very disguises she deplores. For instance, at the opening of her narrative, she postures as the cool rationalist who remains ostensibly unmoved by all that takes place at the

house in Bretton. The space of the house itself (reminiscent of the orderly arrangement of the Lockean camera) is conducive to the quiescence of a mind that wishes to remain undisturbed by passion:

> The large peaceful rooms, the well-arranged furniture, the clear wide windows, the balcony looking down on a fine antique street, where Sundays and holidays seemed always to abide--so quiet was its atmosphere, so clean its pavement--these things pleased me well. (5)

Embodying the quiet orderliness of her surroundings, Mrs. Bretton is another dispassionate consciousness who knows how to order and command. Preferring "all sentimental demonstration in bas relief" (221), Mrs. Bretton is a "commanding" woman (10) who is "never wont to make a fuss about any person or anything" (217). A woman whose authority and "bas relief" temperament has more than a little affinity with Madame Beck's cool rationalism, Mrs. Bretton (and the house she inhabits) represent a female collusive architecture of the self to which Lucy is, at first, very much attracted.

Wishing to appear as a cool rationalist herself, Lucy presents herself as a dispassionate observer. She declares in the self-identifying sentence in which she first mentions her name, "I, Lucy Snowe, plead guiltless of that curse, an overheated and discursive imagination . . . " (14). When Polly suffers agonies at the departure of her father, Lucy reiterates her imperturbability: "I,

Lucy Snowe, was calm" (26). Instead of consoling Polly when Graham rejects her in favour of his school friends, Lucy prefers to "improve the occasion by inculcating some of those maxims of philosophy whereof I had ever a tolerable stock ready for application" (31). Sententiously, she wonders how Polly will "bear the shocks and repulses, the humiliations and desolations, which books and my own reason tell me are prepared for all flesh?" (41). Quietly watching all that takes place in the household, Lucy wishes to appear as the observer _in camera_ whose reasoned perceptions can master the "shocks and repulses" of impassioned subjective response.

After Lucy leaves Bretton, she continues to demonstrate a similar tendency to adapt to the psychological "spaces" in which she finds herself. At Miss Marchmont's, for instance, she seems all-too ready to accept her enclosed existence and to live within the confines of Miss Marchmont's "sick-chamber" with its "steam-dimmed lattice" (45). In this enclosed _camera_, where the "dimmed" aperture precludes any perception of the outside world, Lucy professes to be content. Forgetting that there are "fields, woods, rivers, seas and ever-changing sky" beyond the "lattice" (45), Lucy accepts the circumscription of her life almost as passively as Polly accepts her domestic enclosure. Although her study

of Miss Marchmont's "originality," "virtues" and "passions" provide an interesting if enclosed "view of a character," Lucy admits that this "crawling" life is one of "endurance" rather than fulfilment (45).

Another instance of such adaptation occurs at the pensionnat when Madame Beck offers Lucy the chance to teach. In a performance very much like Crimsworth's assumption of power at Mdlle. Reuter's school, Lucy is very quick to exert the harsh authority she deplores in her description of those students who have been "trained to be crushed." In a bid to attain ascendancy, Lucy performs a decisive "act of summary justice" on a mutinous student by locking her in a closet (98). Expressing a Crimsworthian wish to "stigmatize" these students with "contemptuous bitterness" (98), Lucy seems to be operating the same oppressive "machinery" that perpetuates the students' abasement. Assuming the very mastery she herself despises and suffers from, Lucy appears, in this instance, as one of those women (like Madame Beck) whose power consists in the subjugation of other women.

In all of these performative adaptations, Lucy is attempting to exert some measure of control over the cognitive and physical structures in which she must function as a woman. In each example, Lucy adapts herself to the boundaries of the cameras in which she lives as a

means of achieving coherence and stability. Of these experiments, the most ostensibly empowering is the appropriation of a masculine rationality that will grant her (as it does Mrs. Bretton and Madame Beck) a degree of authority and mastery that the domestic confinement in Miss Marchmont's sick room cannot.

However, such postures, in Lucy's case, are fragile and unstable. Whereas Polly, Madame Beck, Ginevra and Mrs. Bretton are all complacently integrated in and validated by the "machine" of masculine culture, Lucy's participation in the paradigms of male authority is stormy and disruptive. As Polly announces in the face of Lucy's assumed rationalism: "Lucy Snowe is a _tatterbox_!" (32). This lisped indictment (Polly actually wishes to say "chatterbox") implies that Lucy is far more interfering and loquacious than her posture of disinterest would suggest; but the emphasized word "_tatterbox_," also implies that Lucy's assumed integrity as a rationalist observer _in camera_ is torn and fragmented, an implication borne out by the clues Lucy inserts in her narrative. She admits that she is "rapt from cool observation" during a moment of intense curiosity when Mr. Home arrives to visit Polly (15). The instability and intensity of emotion which Lucy's cool exterior masks, is also evident in the statement Lucy makes when Mr. Home kisses Polly: "I

wished she would utter some hysterical cry, so that I might get relief and be at ease" (16). Far from being a distanced observer, Lucy is possessed by a destabilizing passion that is much more "hysterical" than the emotions and "angular vagaries" (15) she attributes to Polly, a fact she states more openly when she admits, "I scarcely know what thoughts I had; but they ran risk of being hardly more rational and healthy than that child's must have been" (14).

Also telling is Lucy's visit to London, the "wilderness of which the vastness and the strangeness tried to the utmost" her "powers of clear thought and steady self possession" (55). Adopting the "staid manner" which, like a "hood and cloak of hodden gray" helps her to repress the "excited and unsettled air" that might "brand" her as a "dreamer and zealot" (53), Lucy approaches London in a manner calculated to bolster her rational self-possession against the chaotic "wilderness" of "Babylon" (55). Announcing that the reader "would not thank [her] for an elaborate reproduction of poetic first impression" (55), Lucy obviously wishes to continue in the mode of the rational observer who cannot be undone by the disorientating "strangeness" of this unknown city. But Lucy _is_ undone and "tattered" by this unknown territory: "In London for the first time . . . confused with

darkness; palsied with cold; unfurnished by either experience or advice to tell me how to act, and yet--to act obliged" (36).

After a night of fear and self-doubt Lucy awakens to a more positive attitude, but she is still in a territory that disrupts her rational composure. Like Crimsworth, she sees and admires the dome of St. Paul's, which Tanner identifies as "an old symbol for completeness and harmony in space" (30). But, unlike Crimsworth (whose description of London and the dome is confined to the view from his room), Lucy closes the distance between herself and the city she sees. In "an ecstasy of freedom and enjoyment" she gets "into the heart of city life," where she experiences "perhaps an irrational but a real pleasure" (59). In contrast to the "looker-on at life" (174) that she professes to be, Lucy shows herself here as an impassioned participant whose "irrational" responses belie her rational integrity.

In London, Lucy experiences the disorienting excitement of transgressive behaviour. She exults in the fact that, "alone," she "dared the perils of crossings" (59)--an evocative phrase that not only foreshadows her crossing of the Channel, but also implies a daring desire to transgress the boundaries of the rational _camera_ she has borrowed as the container of her selfhood. The fact

that she travels from London to the even more foreign territory of Labassecour on a ship called "The Vivid," suggests that such crossings are, for Lucy, vivifying experiences that take her out of herself into the territory of the unknown where the codes and spaces of female self-enactment might be transgressed and radically altered.

Thus, in contrast to the other female actresses in her narrative, Lucy is a being who rends the outlines of her self in order to reconceive herself otherwise. A "tatterbox" whose ostensible rationality disguises a radical disorientation, Lucy's camera of selfhood manifests itself as a space of fragments that refuse to realign themselves with the already-known. In contrast to the ordered containment of the Lockean closet, Lucy (in a decidedly female image of cognitive containment) presents her mind as a repository of fragments. When Mrs. Barret (Lucy's old nurse) mentions that an acquaintance had found a comfortable position as a nurse in a foreign family (54), Lucy states that she "stored up this piece of casual information, as careful housewives store seemingly worthless shreds and fragments for which their prescient minds anticipate a possible use some day" (54). This idea of the mind as a paradoxical container of discontinuity is also in striking contrast to Polly, the image of perfect

domesticity, whose mind reflects the "integrity" she has achieved by consenting to her given role. Polly, like a good domestic manager (and female analogue of the orderly Lockean closet), regulates and stores all the "images of memory" that knit and homogenize the self:

> Her eyes were the eyes of one who can remember; one whose childhood does not fade like a dream, nor whose youth vanishes like a sunbeam. She would not take life, loosely and incoherently in parts: she would retain and add; often review from the commencement, and so grow in harmony and consistency as she grew in years. (345)

Lucy's cognitive housewifery (which <u>does</u> "take life loosely and incoherently in parts") is more devoted to snatching and storing fragments of information that have no link, as yet, to a harmonized whole--only to a possible future.

As Lucy's fragmentations and transgressions suggest, hers is a selfhood with the capacity to disrupt and overstep the spaces of female selfhood constructed within the bourgeois rationalism of a male-dominated culture. When she arrives in Villette, where, as a foreign female, she is doubly alienated from the social and cultural order, Lucy experiences the consequences of her unwillingness to cohere as a codified female self. Lucy, who had wished "to escape occasional great agonies by submitting to a whole life of privation and small pains" (46), discovers the "agonies" of a non-cohesive female

selfhood. Although she can, at times, exult in her transcendent incomprehensibility (as she does when she compares the bourgeois architecture of Graham's house to the expansiveness of her "Peribanou's tent") Lucy pays a high price for such distinction. When she buries Dr. John's letters marked with the "Cyclops-eye" (298) of his sealing wax, Lucy is also painfully and reluctantly foregoing the possibility of being absorbed by that eye, a process that is Paulina's "privilege."[5]

When, during the long vacation, she is left alone in the empty school with only a servant and a "deformed and imbecile pupil" for company, Lucy suffers the most intense mental agony. Living virtually alone in the "vast and void," "desolate premises," Lucy is as lost and alone as she was in the wilderness of London (193). Finding herself in a "hopeless desert" of despair, Lucy, like Jane on the moors, is at the extreme of alienation and solitude. Feeling "torn, racked and oppressed in mind" (197), Lucy's tattered psyche has indeed forfeited the "small pains of a whole life" for "great agony."

This is not to say, however, that such suffering, however non-consolatory, is meaningless. Recalling Jane's moments of catalepsy, Lucy's mental rupture (which also ends in unconsciousness) becomes both a means of interrogating the "grounds" of integrated consciousness

and a demonstration of how the mind's disorientations can disintegrate the parameters of self and other, real and spectral. When Lucy awakens at La Terrasse, for instance, she registers a "tearing" of mind and body that leads to a disturbing estrangement of the real:

> The divorced mates, Spirit and Substance, were hard to re-unite: they greeted each other, not in an embrace, but a racking sort of struggle. . . . I sat up appalled, wondering into what region, amongst what strange beings I was waking. At first I knew nothing I looked on: a wall was not a wall--a lamp not a lamp. I should have understood what we call a ghost, as well as I did the commonest object; which is another way of intimating that all my eye rested on struck it as spectral. (207)

Like the images in the theatrical _camera_ which are indistinguishable from the images of the "real," the objects in Lucy's bedroom have been translated into a spectrality that brings to awareness the virtuality of the self as it manifests itself in the mind. In the space of cognition to which Lucy awakens, the virtual or "spectral" has as much "reality" as the "most common object." This virtualization of the real extends to the spatial organization of Lucy's perceptions because she experiences her bedroom, a "cabinet with sea-green walls" (211), not as a well-defined space within a solid house, but as a dislocated profundity: "My calm little room seemed somehow like a cave in the sea" (227). Simultaneously a "calm little room" and a "cave in the sea," Lucy's bedroom is

the spatial analogue of her mind where submerged, estranging perceptions that spectralize the quotidian, rise to disturb and disrupt the "calm" room and eye of Lockean cognition.

Lucy's image of her mind as a profundity that paradoxically lives within the architecture of bourgeois materialism is strikingly near to Artaud's concept of a radical theatre that resists the replication and affirmation of the quotidian:

> Theatre is the double, not of direct everyday reality of which it is gradually being reduced to a mere inert replica, but of another archetypal and dangerous reality, a reality of which the Principles, like dolphins, once they have shown their heads, hurry to dive back into the obscurity of the deep. (48)

Like Artaud's doubled theatre, Lucy's doubled consciousness introduces a concept of mind that embraces occult "Principles" which cannot be ordered or rendered lucid by rational paradigms. Certainly, through the numerous references to storm, shipwreck and drowning, Lucy gives place in her narrative to the disturbing profundity that lives beneath the seemingly ordered surface of her life. Although she "studiously [holds] the quick of [her nature,] in "catalepsy and a dead trance" (134), this self-enforced passivity (which Lucy employs as another means of mitigating the "great agony" of her life) is unequal to the violence of the "dangerous reality" that

lives within her mind. When Lucy recalls the effects of a storm during her early days at the pensionnat, she experiences this arousal of a submerged and turbulent "being": "At this time I well remember whatever could excite--certain accidents of the weather for instance, were almost dreaded by me because they woke the being I was always lulling and stirred up a craving cry I could not satisfy" (134). Unaccommodated by the paradigms of "present existence" (134), this obscured "being" and its attendant "longings and desires," can only be repressed "after the manner of Jael to Sisera" by "driving a nail through their temples" (135). By means of this figuration, whose violence more than equals the storm that arouses her "lulled" self, Lucy inscribes the vehemence that resists resubmergence: "Unlike Sisera, they did not die: they were but transiently stunned, and at intervals would turn on the nail with a rebellious wrench; then did the temples bleed, and the brain thrill to its core" (135). However dangerous in their potential for pain, these moment of "rebellious wrenching" are excruciatingly profound moments when the "brain thrill[s] to its core" and becomes aware of those turbulent movements that refuse to be eclipsed by the cataleptic stupor and seeming wholeness of the dutifully rationalized mind. A heretic in the territory of Lockean hegemony where materialistic

rationalism prevails, Lucy commits herself to a painful self-deconstruction that inscribes a subjectivity uncircumscribed by the parameters of the rational real.

These transgressive, "wrenching" moments, that tear the spaces of a gendered cognitive and cultural order, also refer to the sublimity of a female genius that defies the boundaries set by a masculine, intellectual elite, represented by M. Paul. M. Paul sees a "'woman of intellect'" as a "'lusus naturae,' a luckless accident, a thing for which there was neither place nor use in creation'" (445). When, during the "show trial" devised by M. Paul, Lucy faces the "savants" who wish to test her intellectual capacity, she is intimidated but scornful because these men expect her to subdue and regulate her genius so that it will cohere with their rational requirements.

For Lucy, the "Creative Impulse" is "the most capricious, the most maddening of masters," which "would not speak when appealed to, would not, when sought, be found . . . " (447). Perversely, this

> irrational demon would wake unsolicited, would stir strangely alive, would rush from its pedestal like a perturbed Dagon, . . . rousing its priest, perhaps filling its temple with a strange hum of oracles . . . and grudging to the desperate listener even a miserable remnant . . . . (447-8).

The absurdity of making this intractable "genius" (which

bears a strong resemblance to Lucy's own perverse nature) "tractable" (448) to M. Paul's scheme, is expressed in Lucy's conclusion to her dissertation on her genius:

> And this tyrant I was to compel into bondage, and make it improvise a theme, on a school estrade, between a Mathilde and a Coralie, under the eye of a Madame Beck, for the pleasure and to the inspiration of a bourgeois of Labassecour! (448)

Although she does, successfully, take part in the "trial," Lucy's resistance emphatically acknowledges the "intractable" and occult nature of a genius incomprehensible to the savants and the eye of Madame Beck. Unwilling to "compel" her genius "into bondage," Lucy prefers to remain a "lusus naturae," "without a place in creation," rather than to adapt herself and her disruptive creativity to the complacent minds of Villette's bourgeoisie.

This desire to remain unframed within the ready-made codes of female self-enactment, is also evident in Lucy's rejection of the _Cleopatra_ and _La vie d'une femme_. We have already seen how Lucy's rejection of these "masterpieces" constitutes a refusal to acknowledge such catoptric completions of male desire. However, Lucy's gesture goes farther than this. As a "refreshment" from the "gipsy-queen" (the _Cleopatra_), Lucy turns to the "exquisite little pictures of still life" which "hung modestly beneath that coarse and preposterous canvas"

(251). Eschewing the largest and most striking work, Lucy prefers to look at what is overlooked and nearly invisible. In these miniatures, Lucy proposes an alternative to the immense and obtrusive visibility of the _Cleopatra_. Particularly significant is the image of "mossy wood-nests, casketing eggs that looked like pearls seen through clear green sea-water" (251). By focusing on this image, whose sea imagery associates it with the sea-cave of Lucy's room at La Terrasse, Lucy indicates the presence of a profundity that exists beneath the sovereign materiality of the _Cleopatra_. The image of "casketing" nests filled with eggs implies a generative, interiorized infinity containing something unformed and immeasurable. Lucy's miniature, in contrast to the framed and coded _Cleopatra_, gestures towards an unseen potentiality. A kind of _camera in ovo_ or _ovo in camera_, the nested eggs symbolize unborn possibilities of female subjectivity seemingly precluded by the obtrusive solidity of the "gipsy queen" who has been framed by and for the gaze of the male eye.

Thus, for Lucy, the life of the mind is a constantly disturbed and disturbing affair that cannot be manifested through the regulated and regulatory enactments of female subjectivity. Her response to the available cognitive and perceptual structures is a consistent, if painful, refusal

to count herself among those "natures elect, harmonious and benign" (546), whose "happy" endings are indicative of their participation in an already-scripted play of male and female "destiny."[6] Anomalous and recalcitrant, Lucy refuses to "see" with eyes that can only perceive the outlines of a gendered structure designed to master and control female vision. Unwilling to be absorbed into a disempowering eye/I, Lucy tells Polly (whose own eyes have been appropriated by Graham's) that Graham, like a male Medusa, is dangerous to female vision. "I never see him," she declares. "I mean that I value vision, and dread being struck stone blind" (532). Tantalized but resistant, Lucy remains true to her "fitful" (532) nature which, like her "intractable" genius, cannot be harmonized with the male-dominated female eyes of a Polly or Madame Beck. As Lucy declares to Polly: "I shall share no man's or woman's life in this world, as you understand sharing." Fittingly, Polly responds with a statement that confirms Lucy's wilful disharmony and incohesion: "Lucy, I wonder if anybody will ever comprehend you altogether" (533).

As her disoriented and disorienting awakening at La Terrasse suggests, the mind and being Lucy inscribes in her narrative is one that is profoundly incohesive and resistant to available structures of reality and selfhood. Evading the gendered outlines of the unitary self, Lucy

proposes a being who is placeless, anomalous and radically unavailable to comprehension. The questions she asks of herself just before she sets out on her journey from London are more than mere rhetoric. "What prospects had I in life? what friends had I on earth? Whence did I come? Whither should I go?" (56). Here Lucy articulates the enigmatic nature of her selfhood and the resistance of that selfhood to anything but a questing and questioning form of articulation. As Karen Chase remarks, Lucy is "a character without definition, a name without identity, and a voice without origins" (67). While Boumelha finds it difficult to accept such a complete enigma as a feminist heroine (see 113-114), I believe that Lucy is heroic in her heretic resistance to completion. Like Jane Eyre, whose rebellious response to self-completion through Rochester is to shout "I will care for myself!," Lucy "cherishes" herself by refusing to cohere, by remaining a shadowy potentiality unaccommodated by bourgeois/rationalist structures of a passive, complicit femininity. When, dressed in the "dun mist" gown she has chosen for herself, Lucy appears as a shadowy "spot" on the field of bride-like girls dressed in white gowns (161), Lucy inscribes the shadow that Lyndall Gordon has identified as Brontë's "potency that goes unseen" (4). Like Jane's non-entical "medium" of selfhood, Lucy's

incohesive and inconclusive selfhood represents potential rather than realization. It is a shadowy space informed by "the strange hum of oracles," rather than the coded (and gendered) lucidities of rational/realist vision.

Throughout Villette, the virtuality of cognitive being constantly threatens the solidity of bourgeois reality with its surreal manifestations. As Suzy Gablik has noted, one of the "major achievements" of twentieth-century surrealist art has been to show "the object weaned from its source and left to seek out relationships other than the familiar ones" (102). Lucy Snowe, who sees "common everyday objects" as spectres, and is identified as an "object that has no place in creation," is herself a preternatural being left to "seek out relationships other than the familiar ones." A scandalously unaccompanied and unaccommodated female who launches herself on "the Vivid" to discover an as-yet-unseen life, Lucy traverses the structures of a male-dominated culture as a strategically disoriented and disorienting surreality.

In this anti-ontological project she is close to Artaud's concept of a subversively surreal theatrics. In his "Theatre of Cruelty," he proposes a theatrics that "will cause not only the recto but the verso of the mind to play its part; the reality of imagination and dreams will appear there on an equal footing with life" (123).

What the "cruelty" of Artaud's theatre means, is something similar to the "great agony" Lucy endures in order to remain heretic and disjunctive. According to Artaud, theatre should "unforgettably root within us the idea of a perpetual conflict, a spasm in which life is continually lacerated, in which everything in creation rises up and exerts itself against our appointed rank . . . " (92). Theatre is a transgressive process that creates what Artaud calls a "virtual revolt" (28) against the reality of the objective world and directs us to the "primordial directions of the mind, which our excessive logical intellectualism would reduce to merely useless schemata . . . " (50-1). The "space" of theatre that Artaud wishes to create, is one that exists "between dream and events" (93). For him, "the highest possible idea of the theatre is one that reconciles us philosophically with Becoming . . . " (109). Lucy, too, inhabits a place "between dream and events" and creates a life-lacerating narrative in which the turbulent risings of "creation" all work against the reinscription of "appointed rank." Lucy's theatre, epitomized in the metamorphic rendings of Vashti, is similarly a "cruel" force that explodes the structures of reality to reveal the abyss of the virtual where "Becoming" overtakes being.

In Villette, theatre represents an investment in

spectrality that renders ambiguous the idea of the subject in relation to the object, that fragments the self, and stresses assumptions concerning subjectivity itself. In Lucy's world, the movement from material to spectral and back again, is the movement that illuminates the insufficiencies of the real and reveals the presence and power of a subversive virtuality. The suggestion that the world of _Villette_ is "contained" by the idea of theatre is implicit in Lucy's description of the audience on the night of Vashti's performance: "The theatre was full--crammed to its roof: royal and noble were there; palace and hotel had emptied their inmates into those tiers so thronged and hushed" (321). In this pivotal moment of theatre (which occurs at the centre of Lucy's narrative), the bourgeois world of Villette and the theatrical spectrality of Vashti are conflated in a _camera_ that ambiguously accommodates both the real and the virtual. Whereas the audience would normally be safely distanced from the dangerous enactments of the "bad" woman on stage, Vashti's self-immolating performance, which is "half lava, half glow" (321), is "realized" in the spark that threatens to set fire to the theatre. In this disturbing moment, the virtual _does_ overtake the real and throws into chaos what Lucy calls the "flesh-and-blood rock" (327) of bourgeois "reality."

If the theatre represents the camera of an invasive virtuality, Vashti's performance enacts the prophetic theatricality of being that Lucy herself "embodies." In the spectacle of Vashti, Lucy perceives a "new planet," something that "had not encountered my eyes yet" (321). She compares Vashti to a "star" that "seen near" is "a chaos--hollow, half consumed . . ." (321). Like Lucy's own torn and chaotic self, Vashti "rises" as a "hollow" power that paradoxically consumes itself yet is manifested in the very process of that consumption. Named after the Biblical queen who refused to show herself to men, Vashti, with her burning, ineffable presence, is the counterpart of Lucy's own "zealot" soul that, hidden in shadow, refuses to be contained by the eye/I of her own, male-dominated culture.

Vashti's performance is also, for Lucy, the sign of a prophetic presence that transcends and sweeps away all known forms and expectations:

> I had seen acting before, but never anything like this: never anything which astonished Hope and hushed Desire; which outstripped Impulse and paled Conception; which, instead of merely irritating imagination with the thought of what might be done . . . disclosed power like a deep, swollen winter river, thundering in cataract, and bearing the soul, like a leaf, on the steep and steely sweep of its descent. (323-4)

Vashti's acting reveals an abyssal being swept by the turbulent forces of becoming. Here Lucy sees, beyond

"Hope," "Desire" and "Conception," the painfully thrilling vision of a being as violently "torn" into incohesion herself. Presenting a "vision for the public eye" that is far more violent than the "milder condiments" it is used to, Vashti is "torn by seven devils; devils which cried sore and rent the tenement they haunted, but still refused to be exorcised" (322). A torn and tearing inhabitant of the camera of selfhood, Vashti consents to the pain of this rending as Lucy does to hers: "To her, what hurts becomes immediately embodied: she looks on it as a thing that can be attacked, worried down, torn in shreds. Scarcely a substance herself, she grapples to conflict with abstractions" (322). As an actress even more heretic and outcast than Lucy (who calls her "low, horrible, and immoral" [322]), Vashti is a perverse ideal whose "murderous" sublimity and satanic heroism conquers those aspects of the female self that are reflections of male desire: "Wicked perhaps she is, but also she is strong; and her strength has conquered Beauty, has overcome Grace, and bound both at her side . . . . Even in the uttermost frenzy of energy is each maenad movement royally, imperially, incedingly [sic] upborne" (323). Forced to crush what, as a female, is also part of herself, Vashti is a heroine who can only "conquer," like Lucy, through her own disintegration. In the "mighty

revelation" (322) of Vashti's performance, Lucy sees her own prophetic self and resonates to the power of a genius akin to her own. "The strong magnetism of genius drew my heart out of its wonted orbit; the sunflower turned from the south to a fierce light . .. a rushing, red, cometary light--hot on vision and to sensation" (323). In this intensely realized reflection that is "hot on vision and to sensation" Lucy is drawn "beyond Conception" into the "unwonted orbit" of a revolutionary selfhood.

Significantly, Lucy sets this fiery metamorphosis against the framework of the female as she is embodied by the eye of male culture: "Where was the artist of the Cleopatra? Let him seek here the mighty brawn, the muscle, the abounding blood, the full-fed flesh he worshipped: let all materialists draw nigh and look on" (322). Extending the moment of spectral heroism, Lucy declares that the mage-like power of the disembodied Vashti would "cut through" the "pulpy mass" of the Cleopatra and overthrow Rubens' "army of fat women": "the magian power or prophet virtue gifting that slight rod of Moses, could, at one waft, release and re-mingle a sea spell-parted, whelming the heavy host with the down-rush of overthrown sea-ramparts" (323). Possessed by what she sees, Lucy invokes, through Vashti, the turbulent unseen power that will disintegrate and re-mingle the coordinates of female

selfhood into something other than the "pulpy mass" of male engendered bourgeois womanhood.

When she turns to inquire of Graham what he thought of the performance, he responds in "a few terse phrases" with the "branding judgement" that labels Vashti as a woman rather than a great and revelatory "artist." Thinking "his own thoughts, in his own manner," Graham, who "had no communion" with Vashti, is among those "materialists" whose vision cannot see beyond "Desire" and "Conception." A "Cool, young Briton," he is "<u>impressionable</u>" but "<u>unimpressible</u>" (325).[7] Without sympathy for "what was wild and intense," (324) his is the mind of a rationalist and empiricist (Lucy refers to him as a man of "dry materialist views" [321]), whose eye and mind can be impressed with data but cannot be seared by the "fire brand" (324) of the visionary (although he is not loathe to "brand" women who outstep the protocols of femininity).

Like Vashti, the actress and spectre who is "hot on vision and to sensation," the virtual in <u>Villette</u> is, however phantomic, something to be reckoned with. Just as the theatrical <u>camera</u> can contain the materialists of Villette and "drown" their "fat women" in a flood of prophetic vision, Lucy's "grappling" consciousness, which tears at the boundaries of the real, is a fragmented

camera with the power to reshape and estrange the objective and objectifying world which she inhabits. Her personifications, for instance, are particularly vividly conceived and seem to have all the force of "real" beings. Like Vashti, these mental images have an affective life that defies their status as illusion. Indeed, the creation of such inner dramatizations seems to be Lucy's particular genius. During the show trial, an occasion when her intractable genius does awaken, she produces an image of "Human Justice" as a "beldame with arms akimbo." With the creation of this "real" phantom, Lucy transforms an abstraction into a mind spectre that has all the force and fury of a Vashti. Similarly, in her dialogue with the "hag" "Reason" (287), Lucy creates a forceful inner drama, that recreates this particularly masculine idea as a female "entity." As "vindictive as a devil," this realized abstraction is the very antithesis of the cognitive clarity that is associated with the idea of the rational. Here, the cool rationality Lucy displayed at Bretton is interiorized with a vengeance. But the very intensity of this inner drama in which a female reason "rains ceaseless blows" (287) suggests that there has been a rearrangement of the "natural" order. Like the "brain-thrilling" image of Jael and Sisera, the scene of Lucy's battle with Reason is a mental discord that, for all its

pain, explodes the idea of reason as an abstract absolute. Like Vashti "torn by seven devils," the shadowy Lucy--possessed by inner drama--is also a theatrical being who, "scarcely a substance herself," "grapples to conflict with abstractions."

As Lucy's mental dramas suggest, the real and the virtual become increasingly interchangeable as she traces the anti-ontology of her recalcitrant female selfhood. This is a condition Lucy herself acknowledges early in her narrative: "I seemed to hold two lives--the life of thought and the life of reality" (14). For Lucy, theatre represents a site of transition where the _camera_ of rational vision and cognition gives way to a mind/space that accommodates the transgressive interplay of these "two lives." The pluralizing of consciousness and identity that this interplay involves is evident in the theatrical production at the _pensionnat_. "Entering into" the "emptiness, frivolity and falsehood" (167) of her role, Lucy finds that a "keen relish for dramatic expression had revealed itself as part of [her] nature . . . " (174).[8] However, not only does she discover this capacity for "dramatic expression" in herself, she finds that the masquerades of theatre (like the fiery presence of Vashti) are apt to transgress the boundaries of the stage and "contaminate" the "real" world of the audience.

Completely given over to her role as the "fop," Lucy notices that Ginevra, who plays the "coquette," "throws a certain marked fondness, and pointed partiality into her manner" toward Lucy; but Lucy also notices that Ginevra is simultaneously "acting _at_" Dr. John who is standing in the audience (173). Lucy, who "recklessly alter[s] the spirit of the _rôle_," also transgresses the audience/stage threshold by attempting to "eclipse the 'Ours'" (Dr. John) in Ginevra's affection. In this doubled and doubling space where reality and performance are absorbed by the dynamic of enactment, the parameters of the real as well as the parameters of the unitary subject are overlapped by and absorbed in the spectral extensions of theatre.

In this episode, Lucy (who begins by acting for the "garret-vermin" in the privacy of the attic) is swept (M. Paul rushes her down the stairs) out of her self-containment onto a stage where her selfhood can be extended out beyond the "wonted orbit" of her life. When, in a further extension of her role, she impulsively defends the foppish de Hamal against Dr. John's jealous criticisms, Lucy notices that "for the second time that night I was going beyond myself--venturing out of what I looked on as my natural habits" (187). In this dramatic extension of her selfhood, Lucy realizes how readily the "natural" can be overtaken by the virtual and made to

reveal the possibility of breaking through the "habitual" frameworks that define both the self and the real.

Certainly Lucy's approach to her stage dress reveals a desire to remain heterogenous rather than to reinscribe, even in disguise, the protocols of naturalized male and female roles. While M. Paul urges her to become the "complete" male by adopting an entirely masculine costume which will identify her as "of the nobler sex" (171), Lucy, with her usual intractability, refuses his suggestion and remains stubbornly anomalous by keeping her dress and adding "a little vest, a collar, and cravat, and a paletôt of small dimensions" (172). Heterogeneously constructed as something between male and female, Lucy's dramatic self-engenderment echoes the denaturalizations through which the coded structures of selfhood and the real can be overtaken by the extensions of the virtual. Positioned between male and female, between the real and the virtual, Lucy's performance is another manifestation of a "tattering" theatrics that transgresses normalized assumptions concerning those reality structures that also dictate the place and shape of womanhood.

Closely connected with the idea of this theatre that accommodates the conflation of the real and the spectral, is the possibility of insanity. If the camera of Lucy's mind is a space of subversive theatrics, it is also a

place of cognitive slippage that places her in danger of being labelled as mad. As Sally Shuttleworth points out, in the nineteenth-century, madness was a possibility that existed even within the healthy mind:

> Insanity was no longer a self-evident disease which demarcated the sufferer from the rest of humanity; it could lurk, Victorian psychiatrists suggested, within the most respectable breasts, to be spotted only by the trained eye. (15)

The camera of the rational mind in the nineteenth century is no longer one of pure reason, but harbours, like the illusionistic camera, the power of the spectral. When Dr. John diagnoses Lucy's mental breakdown as a "case of spectral illusion" (312), he is, as Shuttleworth observes, drawing on "contemporary medical science where the subject of 'spectral illusion' proved a constant source of debate" (220).[9]

Thus, in the conflation of Lucy's interior and exterior dramas, the spectral also becomes the locus of the boundary between sanity and insanity as well as the real and the virtual. For Lucy, this means that she must negotiate a complex mental territory where, because of her subversive theatrics which "grapples" with the spectral, she is continually engaging what normative psychology defines as the insanity of "spectral illusion." She must evade, not only naturalized concepts of the female self, but also psychological norms that would label her as

insane. As Shuttleworth observes, Lucy is subjected to numerous "descriptive labels" of her mental condition. On her arrival at the pensionnat, Madame Beck and M. Paul subject her to a phrenological reading. Père Silas, when she visits him in the confessional, diagnoses her "tossed mind" as a "message from God" to bring her "back to the true Church "(200). M. Paul, on further acquaintance announces that her "judgement is warped" (433) and later decrees that her "very faults require" the assistance of a friend because she needs "checking, regulating, and keeping down" (455).

This mental surveillance and categorizing of Lucy's inner, mental condition is indicative of a desire to control and regulate the camera of Lucy's self via the processes of psychological diagnosis. Dr. John, as a medical man and "dry materialist," is particularly threatening because he has all the weight of scientific authority behind him. He sees Jane "from a professional view" and intends to "read . . . all [she] would conceal" (355) (also cited in Shuttleworth 220). As Shuttleworth says in relation to Dr. John's professional penetration of Lucy's secrets:

> The rhetoric of unveiling and penetrating the truth, so prevalent in nineteenth-century science, is here located as a discourse of gendered, social power: male science unveils female nature. (220)

But, just as Lucy's tattered and tattering selfhood evades the structures assigned to women by male culture, she also resists the penetration of psychological surveillance. Just as she uses her rending theatrics to disintegrate the boundaries that define her, she employs her "insane inconsistency" (483) to evade the diagnosis of her mental state as a "case of spectral illusion." What Lucy asserts against such reductive penetration is, again, an ineffable selfhood that cannot be articulated by rational constructions of reality or scientific constructions of sanity/insanity. If Lucy's mind deviates from the norm, it is almost a willed deviation that authorizes her spectral and spectralizing stratagems. As Athena Vrettos suggests in her discussion of Villette,

> Brontë's expansion of the [Gothic] genre constituted a significant departure from traditional depictions of the nerves, linking nervous sensibility to an emerging psychological realism and making illness a condition of narrative authority rather than an expression of sentimental distress. (561)

Like the paradigm of theatre, the idea of mental illness and its associative blurring of inner and outer life, real and spectral, becomes, for Lucy, another means of subversively disintegrating naturalized constructions of the female self. In Villette, the spectral invasions of Lucy's mind are part of the anti-ontology that her disruptive and disrupted narrative authorizes: "Lucy's

entire mode of self-articulation breaks down the hierarchy of outer and inner life upon which definitions of the 'Real' (and sanity) depend" (Shuttleworth 240).

A significant incident that intersects both theatre and the idea of mental illness occurs during the scene of the concert when Lucy catches sight of the King whom she immediately diagnoses as a hypochondriac. If we recall Herbert Blau's comment concerning the sovereign position of Cardinal Richelieu, whose presence commands the direction of all eyes, Lucy's construction of the Labassecourean King interestingly dislocates and complicates this locus of power. Where Richelieu sits in uncontested sovereignty, Lucy's description of the King creates a spectral theatrics that associates him with her own mental state:

> There sat a silent sufferer--a nervous melancholy man. Those eyes had looked on the vistas of a certain ghost--had long awaited the comings and goings of that strangest spectre, Hypochondria. Perhaps he saw her now on that stage, over against him, amidst all that brilliant throng. (267)

Here, in the seat of the authoritative observer, is Lucy's own malady, Hypochondria. By means of this play within a play, Lucy overlaps the space of the theatre with an inner drama that reflects her own "secret horror" (312), the spectre of the nun. In this doubled <u>camera</u> of theatre and mind, Lucy also authorizes her own spectral theatrics, a

manoeuvre that she extends by distinguishing herself as the King's sole audience. She claims that, aside from herself she "could not discover that one soul present was either struck or touched" by the "mournful and significant . . . spectacle" (268). By appropriating the "spectacle" of the King and his spectre as "her" play, Lucy also appropriates for her own malady an authority and distinction that Dr. John's scientific analysis precludes.

This is a perverse distinction Lucy also asserts when she refers to Dr. John's admitted inability to comprehend the "spectacle" of her own derangement: "My art halts at the threshold of Hypochondria: she just looks in and sees a chamber of torture, but can neither say nor do much" (228). Dr. John's professional eye can look into the camera of her mental suffering but remains ineffectual. He tells Lucy, in a proper diagnostic manner, that her "nervous system" has suffered. But Lucy (who shrugs off this diagnosis with the comment "whatever that is") emphasizes the limitations of Dr. John's psychological perspicacity. She identifies his advice to seek "[c]heerful society," to "be as little alone as possible" and to "take plenty of exercise" as a mere iteration of received wisdom: "Acquiesence followed these remarks. They sounded all right, I thought, and bore the safe sanction of custom and the well-worn stamp

of use" (229).

While she does not deny that she suffers, Lucy, as we have already observed, reserves her suffering for her own heretic purposes, not in order to succumb to the psychological categories of male science or to validate regimes that bear the "well-worn stamp of use" (229). As Vrettos suggests, "nervous disease becomes Lucy's vocation; she is called to it as ecstatically as a nun (the figure of her neurosis) is called to religious orders . . . " (567). Like Vashti, the singular actress whose vocation it is to rend herself in transcendent spectrality, Lucy's intense psychic suffering is a means of setting herself "apart from those with ordinary sensibilities" (Vrettos 567) and creating herself as one of the heroic "chosen" whose fate it is to suffer the "spasm in which life is continually lacerated" and to ensure the co-ordinates of being remain undone and unavailable to the grasp of the already known.[10] For instance, after she receives Mrs. Bretton's letter where she is referred to as Mrs. Bretton's "wise, dear, grave little god-daughter," Lucy denies these banal endearments in an explosive description of her malady that places her in the heroic category of the Biblical seer, Nebuchadnezzar, whose hypochondria sets him apart from the mob:

> The world can understand well enough the process

> of perishing for want of food: perhaps few persons can enter into or follow out of that of going mad from solitary confinement. They see the long-buried prisoner disinterred, a maniac or an idiot!--how his senses left him--how his nerves first inflamed,underwent nameless agony, and then sunk to palsy--is a subject too intricate for examination, too abstract for popular comprehension. Speak of it! you might almost as well stand up in an European market-place and propound dark sayings in that language and mood wherein Nebuchadnezzar, the imperial hypochondriac, communed with his baffled Chaldeans. (341-2)

"Baffling" access to her inner self, Lucy's resistance to definition is enacted through her distinguished and distinguishing malady, the theatre of mind (with its spectral comings and goings) that transgresses the boundaries of self and other and inscribes ineffability as the "medium" of Lucy's being.

In the development of Lucy's disintegrative self-narration, one of the most significantly ambiguous figures is the nun. Existing as spectre and reality, as an inner manifestation of Lucy's mind and a material object, the nun transgressively symbolizes what is _between_ the stable categories of inner and outer, self and other. Lucy expresses the disorienting groundlessness of the nun whom she cannot distinguish as either phantom or reality, figure or ground:

> I was left secretly and sadly to wonder, in my own mind, whether that strange thing was of this world, or of a realm beyond the grave; or whether indeed it was only the cold of malady and I of that malady the prey. (315)

As well as her status as a "between being," the nun is also laden with other, significant associations. A symbol of the passive Justine Marie and of the mythic nun who was supposedly buried alive under the pear tree at Madame Beck's school, the nun represents the buried selfhoods of all those women who have been "crushed" by an anti-feminist culture and religion. But the nun is also a charade-figure, a duplicitous disguise that allows de Hamal (like Rochester) to perform as a woman and gain access to those female spaces he would otherwise not be able to enter. A highly complex figure, the nun represents all the spectral/theatrical ambiguity that (like the "hollow" core of Vashti's star) resides at the heart of Lucy's narrative.

When Lucy tears apart the nun/disguise, it is a complex rending, not only of the symbolic selfhoods "embodied" in the nun, but of the "material" structure that distinguishes the real and the spectral. In the "tattering" of the nun's veil, Lucy gets to the "heart" of the enigma that has haunted her, an enigma that has neither shape nor gender:

> And what was she that had haunted me? . .. Not a woman of my acquaintance had the stature of that ghost. She was not of female height. Not to any man I know could the machination be attributed. (588)

What finally emerges at the end of this rending is the

ineffable medium of Lucy's own enigmatic selfhood.

> In a moment, without exclamation, I had rushed on the haunted couch; nothing leaped out, or sprang or stirred; all the movement was mine, so was all the life, the reality, the substance, as my instinct felt. I tore her up--the incubus! (587)

Like Vashti "torn by seven devils," Lucy finds her own being in dissolution. Struggling with the spectres that "hurt" her, she tears at them and, in this dissolving movement, paradoxically realizes her own unseen "life" and "reality."

Increasingly, as Lucy asserts the ambiguity and ineffability that resides at the "core" of her own self, she begins to assign an irreducible complexity to others. In acknowledging the composition of her self as a theatrical compound of antic personae, she also undoes the selfhood of others and thereby absorbs them into the "tatterbox" of her own complex being. It is interesting that her attention is focused on Dr. John, the exemplar of the rational observer and unified masculine self whose "Open! Sesame" (248), which opens all doors in Villette, is indicative of his comprehensive perceptual and social powers. In fact, it is during the visit to the gallery (under the guidance of Dr. John) that Lucy subversively inserts her disintegrative comment. At first she points out his great qualities: his originality of mind which allowed him to "speak direct from his own resources," his

self-sacrificing visits to his patients in the Basse Ville where "he was achieving amongst a very wretched population, a world of active good" (246). But then she abruptly stops and announces that "Dr. John was not perfect, any more than I am perfect. . . . A god could not have the cruel vanity of Dr. John, nor his sometime levity" (247). She points out his "temporary oblivion of all but the present," from which he "extracts whatever it could yield of nutriment to his masculine self-love . . . " (247). To Dr. John, Lucy assigns a duplicitous theatrics that belies his seeming integrity and illuminates the hypocritical masquerade on which the power of his unitary selfhood is based:

> The reader is requested to note a seeming contradiction in the two views which have been given of Graham Bretton--the public and private--the out-door and the in-door view. In the first, the public, he is shown oblivious of self . . . . In the second, the fireside picture, there is expressed consciousness of what he has and what he is; pleasure in homage, some recklessness in exciting, some vanity in receiving the same. Both portraits are correct. (247).

In this woman's view, which shows Graham in his "fireside" character, the public persona is complicated and subverted. Finally, Lucy discovers her own "force" in his complete inability to comprehend <u>her</u>:

> With a now welcome force, I realized his entire misapprehension of my character and nature. He wanted always to give me a role not mine. Nature and I opposed him. He did not at all guess what I felt: he did not read my eyes, or

> face, or gestures; though, I doubt not, all spoke. (395)

As Lucy's narrative progresses, she also increasingly acknowledges the hegemony of her own psyche. In the Basse Ville, for instance, she walks into a labyrinthine territory that reflects her own transformative mental processes. Lucy announces that she "rather liked the prospect of a long walk, deep into the old and grim Basse Ville," particularly with the possibility of a rainstorm in view, because the storm "sweeps a great capital clean before you; it makes you a quiet path through broad, grand streets; it petrifies a living city as if by eastern enchantment; it transforms Villette into a Tadmor" (485). In this drenching version of her own "Open Sesame," Lucy opens a "path" to a mental territory ruled by the "enchantment" of her own imaginative powers. She enters the Basse Ville as she enters the "sea-cave" of her spectralized reality. Certainly, Madame Walraven's house appears to Lucy as a camera filled with "real" spectres. "Distincter" even than her surroundings, Madame Walravens appears from behind the "vanishing picture" (opening like the curtain on a stage), the "chief figure" of the scene: "Cunegonde, the sorceress--Malevola, the evil fairy" (488). Here Lucy's imagination projects itself (as it does in the spectral appearance of Hypochondria at the concert) to absorb the "real" space of Madame Walraven's

house into the camera of her mental theatrics. Like the Basse Ville itself, whose tortuous, submerged spaces lie beneath the neoclassical façades of Villette[11] and now resurface in Lucy's narrative, Lucy's spectralizing mind surfaces and gestures towards the "archetypal and dangerous reality" that belongs to the ungrounded region of the virtual.

Even more comprehensively disorienting is Lucy's "tour" through the park under the influence of opium. Here Lucy finds a spell to "open" Villette to her disorienting gaze. "Imagination" commands her to "Look forth and view the night!" (547). Penetrating her own particular "door" to the park ("a narrow irregular aperture" in the "orderly . . . colonnade" of lindens [563]), Lucy proceeds to view Villette through the comprehension of her own "irregular" eye/I: "On this whole scene was impressed a dream-like character; every shape was wavering, every movement floating, every voice echo-like--half mocking, half uncertain" (567).

As on the night of Vashti's performance, the "whole world" of Villette is gathered in the park. Here, Lucy takes the role of the "sovereign" observer. Hidden by her shawl and straw hat she moves unseen among the crowd. But, in this dream-like scene, she is both audience and participant. She takes "a revel of the scene" but also

(as in London) "mixe[s] with the crowd where it was deepest" (567). On the fringes yet also deep in the centre of things, Lucy is a doubled observer in a doubled world that elides the quotidian distinctions between inner life and outer reality. Indeed, Lucy "revels" in the virtuality of the event, the masks beneath masks and the dramas within dramas. She discovers that the "land of enchantment" is made up of "pasteboard"; but finds that, even with "its illusion unveiled" the "marvel of the night" remains (566). She looks expectantly for a theatre of mystery where scene unfolds beyond scene:

> Somehow I felt, too, that the night's drama was but begun, that the prologue was but begun, that the prologue was scarce spoken: throughout this woody and turfy theatre reigned a shadow of mystery; actors and incidents unlooked-for, waited behind the scenes . . . . (572-3)

Lucy, in this externalization of her inner theatrics, articulates the abyssal mystery at centre of her consciousness, the aporic "ground" of her undefined self. The sovereign observer of her own psychic territory, she sees herself "drowning" in enigma--just as she sees the "sphynx" when she "fathom[s] the deep, torch-lit perspective of an avenue" (567). For Lucy, on this disturbing night, sight is not constituted in the objectifying perceptions of rationalized vision; instead; it has been appropriated by an I/eye that "revels" in the aporia of virtuality.

Searching for the "source" that impels her, Lucy appropriately identifies a reflecting pool as the "fount" of her night visions:

> My vague aim, as I went, was to find the stone basin, with its clear depth and green lining; of the coolness and verdure I thought, with the passionate thirst of unconscious fever. Amidst the glare, and hurry, and throng, and noise, I still secretly and chiefly longed to come on that circular mirror of crystal, and surprise the moon glassing therein her pearly front. (568)

Reminiscent of Jane's visionary goddess, Lucy's pool of desire is a watery mirror that reflects the "pearly front" of the moon. A vision that, like Jane's dream, affirms the catoptrics of a female vision, the fountain also reflects the sea-drowned enigma that is Lucy's unfathomable self.

This midnight revel in the park which submerges Villette in Lucy's opium dream is just one manifestation of the drownings and shipwrecks that inscribe the abyssal profundity at the centre of her narrative. Their most wrenching manifestation, however, occurs in the drowning of M. Paul. Like the "plot manipulators" who occur in <u>The Professor</u>, M. Paul is the male who comes closest to absorbing Lucy's narrative into his own. In fact, one of the novel's most tantalizing emplotments is the tumultuous romance between Lucy and M. Paul. Reminiscent of the antagonistic affinity between Rochester and Jane, the

irascible communion between Lucy and M. Paul promises to develop into the satisfying symbiosis of Jane Eyre. As his name, Emmanuel, implies, M. Paul even seems fated to "redeem" Lucy from her lonely intractability.

In many ways, too, M. Paul seems a good mate for Lucy; a man unlike other men, he can "see" the flaming spirit within her. At the gathering at the Hôtel Crécy, for instance, he hisses at Lucy that, although she wears an aspect "bien triste, soumise, reveuse," she has "la flamme a l'âme," a statement she emphatically affirms: "Oui; j'ai la flamme a l'âme, et je dois l'avoir" (396). He is also a man who, like Rochester, has a penetrable soul more open than the usual masculine character to female being:

> The same heart [Paul's] did speak sometimes; though an irritable, it was not an ossified organ: in its core was a place, tender beyond a man's tenderness; a place that humbled him to little children, that bound him to girls and women: to whom, rebel as he would, he could not disown his affinity. (425)

He does, in fact, have much in common with Lucy herself. If she has "la flamme a l'âme," he is "comet-like" (266), a "salamander" (443) who can also survive burning. He is at least as perverse and elusive as Lucy herself: "Really that little man was dreadful: a mere sprite of caprice and ubiquity: one never knew either his whims or his whereabouts" (303). Lucy, who "takes pleasure in keeping

cool and working him up" (251), finds in M. Paul a masculine reflection of her own "culpable vehemence" (238).

M. Paul himself emphasizes the affinity of their natures by cataloguing the likeness of their features:

> You are patient, and I am choleric; you are quiet and pale, and I am tanned and fiery; you are a strict Protestant, and I am a sort of lay Jesuit: but we are alike--there is affinity. Do you see it, mademoiselle, when you look in the glass? Do you observe that your forehead is shaped like mine--that your eyes are cut like mine? . . . Do you know that you have many of my looks? I perceive all this, and believe that you were born under my star. Yes, you were born under my star! Tremble! (460)

But for all this seeming affinity, there is an undeniable tone of command. In his exhortation "Tremble!" he is giving Lucy due warning. There are in fact, many indications that M. Paul, if he is to be her saviour, will be a highly autocratic one. Like Rochester claiming Jane as his "likeness and equal" while he intends to "chain" her to his watchguard, M. Paul shows signs of wishing to appropriate and contain Lucy.

During the period when he teases Lucy with his seeming indifference, M. Paul shows himself as a gardener, keeping company with a pretty and complacent "spanieless" who reminds Lucy, disturbingly, of Polly (515). Like Rochester's performance with Blanche Ingram, which is designed to tantalize and entrap Jane, M. Paul's

performance with the spaniel is directed at Lucy who is meant to see in it the image of her desires. Like an Adam delving in the garden with his adoring canine Eve, M. Paul mimes an archetypal, patriarchal scene that should put Lucy on her guard. Furthermore, his description of her features which are "cut" and "shaped" in his own image, bears more than a slight suggestion that he considers himself the Adam--the original of "the nobler sex" (171)--out of whom God shaped woman. Lucy also notices during the concert that he is "in his element, restraining and overawing one hundred ladies" (265-6). M. Paul is, in fact, a practitioner of a masculine sublime that links him to an historically entrenched, patriarchal regime of male dominance.

He is also disturbingly reminiscent of Crimsworth in his voyeuristic desire for scopic control over his female "flock." From his "post of observation," the "magic lattice" (456) that overlooks the "allée défendu" (and recalls Crimsworth's tantalizing board), M. Paul spies on the women at the school and boasts to an outraged Lucy: "My book is this garden; its contents are human nature--female human nature. I know you all by heart" (456). Like a Panoptic Adam surveying the female prisoners in his garden, M. Paul reveals his patriarchal optics. Although Lucy chides him and tells him that "to study the human

heart thus is to banquet secretly and sacrilegiously on Eve's apples" (459), there is no indication that Paul is at all contrite. Certainly his ocular aggression, like Rochester's, implies a desire to know and control rather than to communicate, as is the case when Paul "penetrate[s]" Lucy's "thought and read[s] [her] wish to shun him" (278). As if such penetrative vision were not enough, like Crimsworth, he uses his spectacles to terrorize his "prey," as Lucy discovers when she finds herself "transfixed by his lunettes" (410).

Finally and most disturbingly, Paul displays far too keen a desire to control the being she is at such pains to keep out of bounds. Lucy notices this characteristic at the art gallery when a scandalized Paul requires her to leave the crowd around the Cleopatra and to take a more ladylike position in front of the dreary but proper La vie d'une femme. While Paul joins the other voyeurs in front of the Cleopatra, Lucy observes that "he looked at the picture himself quite at his ease and for a very long while: he did not, however, neglect to glance from time to time in my way, in order, I suppose, to make sure that I was obeying orders and not breaking bounds" (253). While Paul's penetrating insight into Lucy's character shows a degree of understanding, his vision, as the art gallery episode implies, is suspiciously aligned with a masculine

hegemony that wishes to define and control the space of female action and appearance. For Paul, to <u>know</u> Lucy is also to comprehend, suppress and control her: "You are one of those beings who must be <u>kept down</u>. I know you! I know you!" (191).

Although M. Paul's gesture of providing Lucy with the little house and school in the Faubourg Clotilde seems to signify his acceptance of Lucy as the mistress of her own domain, the fact that it is <u>his</u> gift compromises the gesture. For one thing, it had all along been Lucy's own plan to start her own school and become a "rising character" (384):

> When I shall have saved one thousand francs, I will take a tenement with one large room, and two or three smaller ones, furnish the first with a few benches and desks, a black tableau, an estrade for myself; upon it a chair and table, with a sponge and some white chalks; begin with taking day pupils, and so work my way upwards. (452)

By appropriating this plan and realizing it for her in the doll-house establishment he presents to her, Paul is actually inscribing his own "kingly" gesture, as Lucy implies when she declares, "He was my king; royal for me had been that hand's bounty; to offer homage was both a joy and a duty," a duty she expresses by "strok[ing] the soft velvet of his cuff" and then "strok[ing] the hand it surrounded" (606).

Paul's placing her in this "nutshell" place is

disturbingly like Peter Pumpkin Eater's treatment of <u>his</u> wife. Paul's desire to "keep" Lucy is expressed in this act of providing her with this small, attractive, enclosure. He has, in fact, accomplished what Lucy has all along resisted, the penetration, appropriation and comprehension of <u>her</u> space of being. As her description of her feelings for him suggests, her vision, intellect and very being (like Polly's) have been absorbed by the "saviour" who has "given" her life:

> He deemed me born under his star: he seemed to have spread over me its beam like a banner. Once--unknown, and unloved, I held him harsh and strange; the low stature, the wiry make, the angles and darkness, the manner, displeased me. Now, penetrated with his influence, and living by his affection, having his worth by intellect, and his goodness by heart--I preferred him before all humanity" (613).

But, of course, this is not the end of the story. The end of the story, like the beginning, is encompassed in drowning. The "alpha and omega" of Lucy's self-narration is not union with Paul, but the disunion of sundered selves. What constitutes Lucy is narration, not completion in a male other self. Lucy prospers without Paul and the years during which she receives his letters are happy years, happier, in fact, than the brief interlude of symbiosis. In her homage to Paul for the gift he has given her, she is the owned and he the owner; but, during the years of parting, she gradually equalizes

the relationship. She makes him "a little library" within her house. Her school, under <u>her</u> management and without the presence of the little "Bonaparte," "flourishes" (616). During this hiatus, which is never closed, Lucy reverses her condition. Whereas Paul, her "king," had made her his willing vassal (and vessel), she now feels a sense of ownership: "I thought I loved him when he went away; I love him now in another degree; he is more my own" (616). Significantly, what makes Paul more her "own" is the distanced, epistolary relationship she establishes with him. About his letters she declares, "I was spared all stint; I was not suffered to fear penury; I was not tried with suspense" (615). Whereas the Paul of recent memory <u>did</u> try her with suspense and was rather inclined to "stint" her, particularly in his circumscription of her freedom, the Paul of the letters offers "real food that nourished, living water that refreshed" (616).

Through Paul's drowning (or ostensible drowning), Lucy surfaces in narrative. This stormy wrenching apart of selves in favour of words is for Lucy a necessity if she is to keep faith with the abyssal self that is her "vocation." Through the final, unclosed gap that embeds her narrative in probabilities rather than consolatory certainty, Lucy refers us back to the "tattered" enigma that is her self, a process Shuttleworth perceptively

summarizes:

> As readers interpreting signs of Lucy's discourse, we are constantly tempted by the text into re-enacting the role of Dr. John . . . . The text, however, frustrates all such quests for a hidden unitary meaning, deliberately undermining the social and psychological presuppositions which underlie such a quest. (221)[12]

As Lucy herself tells M. Paul: "Monsieur is not going to be gratified by a tale of ambitious proportions, and the spectacle of the narrator sticking fast in the midst" (508).

What we ungratified readers are left with is the enigma that has always been at the "hollow" centre of Lucy Snowe and Villette. Although we are only sure of it at the end, we have been undone, as readers, from the beginning. The image of shipwreck in the final chapter, is, we find, an iteration of the shipwreck that results in Lucy's first "drowning." Just as she frustratingly encourages the reader to picture a happy ending to her story, Lucy, in this early passage extends a similar invitation to fill a gap in her narrative:

> Picture me then idle basking, plump, and happy, stretched on a cushioned deck, warmed with constant sunshine, rocked by breezes indolently soft. However, it cannot be concealed that in this case, I must somehow have fallen overboard, or that there must have been wreck at last. I too well remember a time--a long time, of cold, of danger, of contention. To this hour, when I have the nightmare, it repeats the rush and saltness of briny waves in my throat, and their icy pressure on my lungs. I even know there was a storm . . . . In fine, the ship was

lost, the crew perished. (42)

Here, Lucy ensures that what we face is not her unitary self "sticking fast in the midst," but the abyss of virtuality that has no "bottom" in ontology. As would-be observers looking for the "spectacle" of the narrator's body, we, too, are lost in the "shipwreck" of narrative.

What we are confronted with in Villette is not only our own desire for narrative completion, but an awareness of the createdness of selfhood, the shifts and manoeuvres that constitute subjectivity, and the empowered hypocrisy of a male dominated system that keeps us blind to this possibility. René Magritte once said, "this contradictory and disorderly world of ours hangs more or less together by dint of very roundabout explanations, both complex and ingenious by turns which appear to justify it and excuse those who thrive wretchedly on it" (qtd. in Gablik 185). In Lucy's narrative we witness those naturalized contrivances by means of which a patriarchal society justifies those selves who "thrive wretchedly" in such a culture. By providing a frustratingly incohesive narrative that undoes our preference for self-completion, Lucy gestures towards the unseen and unformed territory of the possible, the "turbulent uprising" that undoes the ontology of the preconceived and makes room for a female shape in the space that is beyond the seen.

Epilogue and Conclusion

I Epilogue

In 1860, Cornhill Magazine published the few existing pages of Emma, a novel Brontë had scarcely begun before she died in 1855. William Thackeray was commissioned to write an introduction to this posthumous publication, which he entitled "The Last Sketch." Rather surprisingly, he opens his "eulogy" of Brontë with a fond recollection of his late friend, the painter Charles Leslie:

> Not many days since I went to visit a house where in former years I had received many a friendly welcome. We went in to the owner's--an artist's--studio. . . . In this room the busy brain had devised, and the skilful hand executed, I know not how many of the noble works which have delighted the world with their beauty and charming humour. . . . There was his late work on the easel--a beautiful fresh smiling shape of Titania . . . . Gracious pure and bright, the sweet smiling image glimmers on the canvas. Fairy elves, no doubt, were to have been grouped around their mistress in laughing clusters. (225)

After another two hundred words or so about Leslie's work, Thackeray finally gets around to introducing Brontë:

> With a feeling much akin to that with which I looked upon the friends--the admirable artist's --unfinished work, I can fancy many readers turning to these--the last pages which were traced by Charlotte Brontë's hand. Of the multitude that has read her books, who has not known and deplored the tragedy of her family, her own most sad and untimely fate? . .. Who that has known her books has not admired the artist's noble English, the burning love of truth, the bravery, the simplicity, the indignation at wrong, the eager sympathy, the pious love and reverence, the passionate honour, so to speak, of the woman. (226)

Thackeray then provides us with a patronizing account of his impressions of Brontë when she first arrived in London after the success of Jane Eyre:

> I remember the trembling little frame, the little hand, the great honest eyes. . .. She spoke her mind out. She jumped too rapidly to conclusions. (I have smiled at one or two passages in the Biography, in which my own disposition or behaviour forms the subject of talk.) She formed conclusions that might be wrong, and built up whole theories of character on them. New to the London world, she entered it with an independent, indomitable spirit of her own; and judged of contemporaries, and especially spied out arrogance or affectation with extraordinary keenness of vision. . . . I fancied an austere little Joan of Arc marching in upon us and rebuking our easy lives, our easy morals. She gave me the impression of being a very pure, and lofty, and high-minded person. (227-8)

After a few obligatory statements about the fate of the human spirit and "the infinite universe of God," Thackeray speculates about the ultimate fate of Emma and Titania:

> Will not the leaf be turned some day, and the story be told? Shall the deviser of the tale somewhere perfect the history of little EMMA's griefs and troubles? Shall TITANIA come forth complete with her sportive court, with all the flowers at her feet . . . ? (228)

Finally, he closes with a description of his own enthusiastic response to Jane Eyre (the only one of her completed works he mentions) and counts himself among those who "will look with mournful interest and regard upon this, the last fragmentary sketch from the noble hand which wrote Jane Eyre" (228).

In what is, I think, a rather ill-intentioned account of a writer he professes to admire, Thackeray, under the guise of his seeming eulogy, is taking pot shots at Brontë. In fact, he disliked her, as he admits in a letter to a friend: "[T]here's a fire and fury raging in that little woman a rage scorching her heart wh[ich] doesn't suit me" (qtd. in Björk 12). His avuncular tolerance of her disapproval also masks the decided discomfort he felt in her presence, which he found rather threatening. When he made the mistake of introducing her as "Jane Eyre" to his mother (thereby causing all the other guests to turn and stare at her), she gave him a memorable tongue-lashing which George Smith describes:

> [Thackeray was][1] standing on the hearth rug looking anything but happy. Charlotte Brontë stood close to him, with head thrown back and her face white. The first words I heard were "No, Sir! If you had come to . . . Yorkshire, what would you have thought of me if I had introduced you to my father before a mixed company of strangers as 'Mr. Warrington'? . . . ." The spectacle of this little woman, hardly reaching to Thackeray's elbow, but, somehow looking stronger and fiercer than himself . . . resembled the dropping of shells into a fortress. (qtd. in Gérin 477)

"Stronger and fiercer" than Thackeray, despite her diminutive size, Brontë was the antithesis of the entirely feminine and erotic Titania, who (along with Leslie) is the real object of mourning in Thackeray's pseudo-eulogy. Like the aesthetic voyeurs in Villette, Thackeray prefers

the reflection of his own desire, embodied in Titania, to the crusty and insubordinate little "Joan of Arc" who causes him distress and discomfort.

Certainly it is hard to avoid the suspicion that Thackeray (who is supposed to be devoting his attention to Brontë) is actually eulogizing Leslie and his work at Brontë's expense. By introducing Leslie first, Thackeray tacitly suggests that Brontë's genius takes second place to Leslie's. Moreover, the "busy brain" of his "genial" friend devised more works than Thackeray can remember, whereas Brontë seems to have written only one novel worth remembering and a small fragment that can be no more than an object of reverent curiosity. Also, while he gives "little EMMA's griefs and troubles" remarkably short shrift, he lingers lovingly over the painting of Titania, even pausing to supply some of the missing details.

Ironically, by undermining her both as a woman and as an author, Thackeray consigns Brontë to the very dilemma she articulates and resists in her writing. She would certainly have recognized (and probably laughed at) the gendered nuances of Thackeray's visual/verbal "eulogy" of her. Extending the irony further is the fact that Emma, in its opening paragraph, obviously addresses the problem of female self-representation. Here the narrator introduces herself by openly inviting the reader's

scrutiny:

> First you may scan me, if you please. We shall go on better together after a satisfactory introduction and a due apprehension of identity. My name is Mrs. Chalfont. I am a widow. My house is good, and my income such as need not check the impulse either of charity or a moderate hospitality. I am not young, nor yet old. There is no silver yet in my hair, but its yellow lustre is gone. In my face wrinkles are yet to come, but I have almost forgotten the days when it wore any bloom. (229).

Here Brontë's narrator assumes the confident pose of a subject who consciously controls the visual territory she defines and inhabits. With matter-of-fact directness she briskly de-eroticizes herself by informing us that she is a middle-class woman in middle life. The antitype of Titania, she belongs, like Jane Eyre and Lucy Snowe, to those female actors who insubordinately resist objectification. Although the reader is invited to "scan" her, Mrs. Chalfont provides a notably evasive description of herself. Neither young nor old, grey nor blond, wrinkled nor fresh, she seems to flaunt her nonentity.

She sets herself in contrast to Miss Wilcox (the directress of a girl's school) who operates within and profits from a visual protocol that perpetuates the construction of the female as an assemblage of physical features indicating her economic and social status as well as her marketability. Miss Wilcox relies on an "undeviating attention to externals," such as the "look,

dress" and "other indicia" of her students (230). In Mrs. Chalfont, Brontë presents a woman who asserts her narrative authority by refusing to play by the usual codes of objectification, and who criticizes the commodification of female appearance that is Miss Wilcox's specialty.

In the face of this work that challenges, even in its fragmentary form, Thackeray's belittling construction of Brontë, "The Last Sketch" appears as a sad testimony to the persistence of a besieged but still-standing male stronghold that (like Thackeray the "fortress") continued to resent and resist the invasion of female authority and female authorship. Ensconced in the space of masculine cultural sovereignty, Thackeray strategically reinscribes the very techniques of disempowerment that Brontë, in all of her writings, worked against.

II Conclusion

In this thesis I have argued how Brontë developed an epistemology and aesthetics of female self-construction that, informed by the paradigm of the camera obscura, became increasingly anti-ontological. By invoking and deploying the theatricality of the camera and the self, Brontë developed a mode of self-creation that could expose and resist the patriarchal structures in which the female subject was inextricably embedded. In place of a female selfhood that enacts itself as the subordinate reflection of a male desire empowered by masculine culture, Brontë proposes an insubordinately elusive female subjectivity that challenges the sureties of male/female divisions by inscribing the performative nature of gender.

While I employ the camera obscura figure as a site of male authority and female enclosure, it also becomes a theatrical construct, capable of paradoxical expansions, overlappings and retransformations, that strategically resists the idea of the subject as a coherent entity. By constructing the camera obscura in Brontë's work as a site of theatre, a place of spectral and specular self-enactment, I emphasize the anti-ontological nature of the female subject in her work. Like the architecture of theatre and the camera, the architecture of selfhood in Brontë is metamorphic and palimpsestic. As in Foucault's

heterotopia which, like theatre, is capable of bringing "onto the rectangular stage, one after the other, a whole series of places that are foreign to one another" (25), the _camera_/theatre of the female self accommodates a paradoxical multivalence that denies the subordinate "authenticity" of female selfhood.

In arguing for this complex structure of the female self, I also argue for Brontë as a sophisticated novelist whose idea of self-as-enactment is not the product of a naive genius, living out her life in the isolation of Haworth. By associating her narratives with the _apparati_ as well as the philosophical and aesthetic discourses that defined, modified and perpetuated the _camera obscura_ model of mind, I emphasize her informed and intelligent engagement with the culture of her period. In doing so, I also inscribe her resistance to that culture and its gendered constructs of the female self. I trace this informed subversion through the satirical resistances of the early work, the liminal invasions of the female self in _The Professor_, the theatricalization of the self in _Jane Eyre_ and, finally, the anti-ontology of the theatrical self in _Villette_. In the subversive, self-empowering masquerades of her female narrators, Brontë shows herself to be what Tromly has recognized: an artist

who is "formidable, mature, and very much in control of the mask through which she speaks" (9).

Endnotes

General Introduction

[1] In The Romantic Impulse in Victorian Fiction, Donald Stone sees Brontë as a writer who "tried to bring her Romantic dreams and ideals within the compass of reality" (100); but he also identifies the Romantic impulse as a female will to authorship. Robert Heilman, in his essay, "Charlotte Brontë's new Gothic," extends Brontë's Romanticism to include the Gothic mode and discusses how the imaginary and the anti-rational elements of Gothic fiction enable the inscription of the female self in her work. Janet Fleenor's Female Gothic, also positions Brontë as part of a subversive Gothic tradition that was and is employed by women to assert authorial power in a culture that historically denigrates female authorship. Margaret Homans ("Dreaming of Children: Literalization in Jane Eyre") and Eugenia DeLamotte (Perils of the Night: A Feminist Study of Nineteenth-Century Gothic) also interpret Brontë's use of the Gothic as a rewriting that challenges the authority of masculine Romantic discourse.

[2] Donald Stone, for instance, states:

> The Victorian novel may be seen . . . as the reserve and refuge of women like Charlotte Brontë, Elizabeth Gaskell, and George Eliot, whose determination to make themselves heard in spite of the prohibitions laid on their sex found expression in the powerful struggle of much Victorian fiction: the struggle between realistic possibilities and romantic aspirations . . . . (138)

In recent criticism, the novel is seen as vehicle for the expression of female "realities," especially the realities of female mental, social and cultural life. See, for instance, Linda Hunt's A Woman's Portion: Ideology, Culture and the British Female Novel Tradition where Brontë is included as a founding member of the realist tradition. Inga-Stinga Ewbank (A Study of the Brontë Sisters as Early Victorian Novelists) and Elaine Showalter (A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing) also define Brontë as a writer whose novels respond to the social and cultural conditions of women and women writers.

[3] The critical tradition with regard to The Professor, has been to interpret it as an inept attempt to appropriate a male "voice." Robert Martin's response in The Accents of Persuasion, is typical of this school of thought (See Ch.

IV). Since the time of Martin's representative statement, The Professor has not really managed to find a place in the Brontë canon as anything but a peripheral work. With the exception of Annette Tromly's impressive analysis in The Cover of the Mask, even more recent critics tend to underestimate its strategic inventiveness. Penny Boumelha, for instance, whose interpretation of Brontë's work is otherwise subtle and persuasive, tends to overstate the ultimate "submissiveness" of the novel's female characters (see Boumelha "The Professor" in Charlotte Brontë 38-57).

[4] Tony Tanner refers to the "small town" of Lucy's life, in his introduction to Villette (13).

Chapter I

[1] The original German title was Handbuch der Physiologischen Optik. The Handbuch, which appeared in three parts (in 1856, 1860 and 1866), was translated into English and published as Helmholtz's Treatise on Physiological Optics in 1924, by The Optical Society of America. This citation comes from the Dover reprint of the Optical Society's publication.

[2] Patrick Brontë's failing eyesight and Brontë's own fears of blindness would suggest that she was not indifferent to the issue of the mechanics of vision. In a letter to Heger, for instance, she mentions the problem of her weak eyesight. "Were I to write much, I should become blind. This weakness of sight is a terrible hindrance to me" (SHLL 2:13). As her father became increasingly blind due to cataract, Brontë was closely involved in the diagnosis and surgical treatment of the disease.
In fact, she was present during the whole operation (see SHLL 2:105-9). Also, the section in Patrick Brontë's copy of Thomas Graham's Modern Domestic Medicine, "Of Cataract" (which is heavily annotated) briefly describes the effect of cataract on the physiology of the eye: "The cataract is an opaque state of the crystalline lens, by which the rays of light are obstructed in their passage to the retina, or expansion of the optic nerve on the bottom of the eye" (226-7).

[3] With the exceptions I have noted, this information is drawn from Hammond's The Camera Obscura, one of the most comprehensive histories I have found.

[4] See The Oxford Companion to Art (191-2).

[5] The voyeuristic qualities of the camera obscura are evident in this excerpt from a handbill (ca. 1840-60) advertising the camera obscura at Fort Margate:

> At a round wooden cabin that stands on the green/I popp'd in my head, and ax'd "What's to be seen?"/ So they shut too the door and made it quite dark,/And then, by Saint Pathric, there was such a lark;--/For on a round-about table, some four feet wide,/Was a picture of all that was moving outside/ . . . There were nursemaids in groups like dishes on shelves,/Whilst the children were left to take care of themselves;/And then on the seats were some couples a wooing,/Whilst I was on the inside watching what they were doing. (qtd. in Hammond 137)

[6] A fuller discussion of Brontë's interest in art appears in the following chapter.

[7] Sir Joshua Reynolds, who owned several camera obscurae, felt that painters should not make use of them, but should rely on their own powers of perception and creation in the making of an art work (Discourses 291). There is some evidence that Brontë was familiar with the Discourses (see below).

[8] Martin Kemp notes that, "as the [nineteenth] century progressed, the acquiring of optical techniques seems to have become part of the grind of necessary tutelage . . . (231).

[9] The Oxford Companion to Art notes:

> [The camera lucida] received this misleading name--for it is not a 'chamber' at all--because it performed the same function as the camera obscura, but in full daylight. It consists essentially of a prism on an adjustable stand. The draughtsman sets the prism between his eye and the paper in such a way that the light from the object is reflected into his eye at the same time as light from the paper. Thus he has the illusion of seeing the image on the paper and can trace its outline. (Oxford Companion to Art 193)

[10] I refer here to works included in Clifford Whone's "Where the Brontës Borrowed Books: The Keighley Mechanics' Institute Library." The titles I note are also mentioned by Hammond as including references to the camera obscura.

[11] Meisel notes that "nineteenth-century academic theory in England seems to have taken seriously only two

books in its library: Lessing's Laocoön (1766) and Sir Joshua Reynolds' Discourses (1769-1791)" (18).

[12] Brontë refers to DeLisle as a painter, "great in the beautiful," while another artist, Dundee, (whom Alexander associates with the painter Martin) is great "in the sublime." Brontë's phraseology suggests that Brontë might have been familiar with Reynold's ideas concerning the beautiful and the sublime and, hence, might have read the Discourses.

[13] Brontë's reading of Richardson is documented in a letter to Hartley Coleridge in which she refers to her familiarity with Richardson, especially Sir Charles Grandison. (See Winnifrith, The Brontës and Their Background, 87).

[14] It is interesting that the modern journal of feminist film criticism is called Camera Obscura.

[15] In fact, W.J.T. Mitchell, one of the foremost theorizers of the relationship between the visual and the verbal image, includes Locke's camera obscura metaphor in his "palimpsest" of "overlapping relationships" which

> displays . . . the matrix of analogies (particularly ocular metaphors) that govern representational theories of the mind" (16). As Mitchell's arrangement suggests, Locke's camera obscura is still operative as an enduring figuration of the relationship between a "real object and a mental image in a mind conceived (as in Aristotle, Hobbes, Locke, or Hume) as a mirror, camera obscura, or a surface for drawing or printing. (16)

[16] Although Locke's use of the plural forms "Windows" and "openings" suggest more than one conduit of sensation, the figuration of the "openings" as "Windows" favours the notion of sight as the main conductor of sensation. Locke himself acknowledged the sovereignty of sight in the comprehension of empirical data elsewhere in the Essay:

> Because Sight, the most comprehensive of all our Senses, conveying to our Minds, the Ideas of Light and Colours, which are peculiar only to that Sense; and also the far different Ideas of Space, Figure, and Motion, the several varieties whereof change the appearances of its proper Object, viz. Light and Colours, we bring our selves by use, to judge of the one by the other. (II.9.9)

[17] In her juvenilia, Brontë refers to Newton as a "sublime" figure:

> I wonder . . . whether the spirit of the mighty Newton roams in crowned majesty over the glorious plains of the centre of light and life, or whether his disembodied soul soars as far above its sphere as did his sublime and almost superhuman mind above those of the common race of mortals. (EEW 1:132)

[18] Hume also takes into account and validates the ideas generated by the imagination, but he does so within the context of a Lockean camera/mind that retains impressions. The "imagination can represent all the same objects that the memory can offer us," but these images lack the "force and vivacity" of memory and therefore leave fainter impressions on the mind (A Treatise of Human Nature 132).

[19] A lengthy essay, "Remarks on the Review of Mr. Stewart's Dissertation in the Quarterly Review," contains an informative (if argumentative) discussion of Stewart's theories of mind which also touches on Reid, Descartes and Locke (Blackwood's Oct. 1817 continued Nov. 1817). "Professor Brown's Outlines of The Philosophy of the Human Mind," (Blackwood's April 1820), consists almost entirely of lengthy quotations from Sketch of a System of the Philosophy of the Human Mind (1820).

[20] Ruth Parkin-Gounelas, although she makes no reference to Locke, insists on the importance of Enlightenment philosophy in Brontë's work:

> Brontë . . . inherited from the Enlightenment the tradition of philosophical psychology which represented the human mind in terms of a few leading faculties: reason, judgement, conscience, memory, feeling imagination. (73)

Brontë's poem "Reason," reflects this inheritance in its setting of "Reason--Science--Learning--Thought" against the demands of passion (Poems 183).

[21] The Wellesely Index identifies John Wilson as the author of these articles. See Walter Houghton, The Wellesley Index (1: 51-53).

[22] See note 27 below.

[23] In a letter to George Lewes (who had sent her copies of Sand's works), she writes: "The 'Lettres d'un Voyageur' are full of the writer's self, and I never felt so strongly as in the perusal of this work--that most of her faults spring from the excess of her good qualities" (SHLL 3: 173).

[24] See my discussion in Chapter 4 for a more detailed account of this passage.

[25] John Héraud is identified as the author of this article in The Wellesley Index. See Walter Houghton, The Wellesley Index (2: 321). Héraud was a regular contributor to Fraser's Magazine in the areas of aesthetics and philosophy.

[26] In a letter dated May 17, 1831, Brontë wrote to her brother Branwell:

> I am extremely glad that Aunt has consented to take in 'Fraser's Magazine,' for though I know from your description of its general contents it will be rather uninteresting when compared with 'Blackwood,' [sic] still it will be better than remaining the whole year without sight of any periodical publication whatever. (SHLL 1:88)

[27] "This is called ABSTRACTION, whereby Ideas taken from particular Beings, become general Representatives of all of the same kind; and their Names general Names, applicable to whatever exists conformable to such abstract Ideas" (Essay II.11.9).

[28] The connection between St. John's candle and the light of reason is also made in Robert Heilman's, "Charlotte Brontë, Reason and the Moon."

[29] The authors go on to describe the Panopticon:

> Though [Bentham's] Panopticon plan was never fully realised, its architectural principles came to be embodied in a large number of prisons built during the 19th century in Britain, the U.S. and other countries. The Panopticon consisted of a circular building to house prisoners in individual cells at the periphery with an inspection tower at the centre. Each cell was to have two windows, one facing the outside and the other facing the inspection tower, which itself was dotted with windows, rendering each cell fully visible from it.

> Windows in the tower were to be covered with venetian blinds in order to make the inspector invisible to the prisoners. (Cousins and Hussain 190)

[30] In his essay, "On Poetry and Art," Coleridge discusses creative inversion:

> Now so to place these images [of nature] totalized and fitted to the limits of the human mind, is to elicit from and to superinduce upon the forms themselves the moral reflections to which they approximate, to make the external internal the internal external, to make nature thought and thought nature--this is the mystery of genius in the Fine Arts. (qtd. in Abrams 50)

[31] As Abrams notes, Locke was a particular offender in Coleridge's view because he constructs the "mind in perception as a passive receiver for images presented ready-formed from without" (57). The "analogies for the mind in the writings of both Wordsworth and Coleridge show a radical transformation [of Locke]. Varied as they are, they usually agree in picturing the mind in perception as active rather than inertly receptive, and as contributing to the world in the very process of perceiving the world" (58).

[32] "De Quincey was one of the authors to whom the Brontës sent a copy of their poems in 1847, and in doing so they acknowledged the 'pleasure and profit we have often and long derived from your works'" (Winnifrith 90).

[33] Patrick Brontë purchased four mezzotints by Martin. Belshazzar's Feast was among them. (See Johnstone 24 and Alexander, "Art and Artists" 191). Christine Alexander discusses the influence Martin's work had on the young Brontës:

> Between the years 1826 and 1839, the years in which Charlotte wrote her juvenilia, Martin supplied over 27 designs for Annuals and journals from his now famous paintings. Charlotte Brontë would have been familiar with Martin's many mezzotint plates for Paradise Lost, which appeared in 1827, and his widely publicised Illustrations of the Bible (1831-35). . . . The architecture of the Great Glass Town resembles Martin's recreations of the lost cities of the ancient world. . . . Branwell's copy of Martin's Queen Esther . . . , made at the age of 12, shows the massive pillars and the

> theatrical setting reflected in so many of the juvenile manuscripts. ("Art and Artists" 191-94)

[34] As Samuel Monk notes, there is a tradition, beginning with Burke, of an architectural sublime: "A building can produce sublimity by suggesting infinity, an impression which the 'perspective of uniform columns, ribs, arches'produces . . . " (The Sublime 141).

[35] For a full discussion of Victorian optical metaphors and epistemology see Shaw's "The Optical Metaphor: Victorian Poetics and the Theory of Knowledge" (Victorian Studies, Spring 1980, 293-324), 33.

[36] I am indebted to Russell Perkin for directing me to this example of the camera obscura.

[37] For a full and insightful discussion of the Marxian camera see W.J.T. Mitchell, "The Camera Obscura of Ideology" in Iconology 168-172.

[38] Heather Glen positions Crimsworth within the self-help culture of the time. While I emphasize Crimsworth's rationalist postures, Glen's essay makes the important point that Crimsworth (as a man) is negotiating a particular social and economic context.

[39] Although I read Shuttleworth's ground-breaking work, Charlotte Brontë and Victorian Psychology, too late to incorporate it in my thesis (with the exception of my chapter on Villette), her study of phrenology and medicine in relation to Brontë's writing also emphasizes the social and economic context in which Brontë worked. While I have set aside the issue of phrenology as beyond the scope of my thesis, I think it important to acknowledge this important modification of models of mind in the nineteenth century and its impact on Brontë's work. Although phrenology does not invalidate my concept of the "space of the mind" it does, as Shuttleworth points out, adapt the idea of mind to the social and economic structures of the period. Phrenology, with its emphasis on innate faculties and the possibility of self improvement, offered a means for women to negotiate and subvert the social and economic restrictions imposed on them:

> In many ways phrenology could function as an empowering doctrine for women: it could be read as a statement of the mental equality between the sexes, and it seemed to offer new vistas of social power and opportunity to be obtained through the careful nurturing of the inner

faculties and the cultivation of self-control. (70)

[40] For a similar interpretation of this incident see Penny Boumelha's Charlotte Brontë (65).

Chapter II

[1] Leslie Stephen's remarks on Brontë represent and extreme example of this position: "The most obvious of all remarks about Miss Brontë is the close connection between her life and her writing. In no books is the author more completely incarnated" (qtd. in Tromly 10). Robert Martin, in his discussion of Jane Eyre, does not make the mistake of confusing author and narrator, but he does suggest that Jane's narrative persona is uncompromised by the ambiguities of performance: "Since we are taken so far into Jane's mind, and since we find it an honest and likable one, we trust her reactions rather than peering over her shoulder in order to form our own opinions" (59).

This tradition has been challenged by critics like Annette Tromly who emphasizes the fact that, "when she chose autobiography as a narrative strategy, Brontë was creating another device for distancing" (14). More recently, Maggie Berg has made the same point about Jane Eyre. According to Berg, "we lose sight of the fact that Jane Eyre is a deliberate exploration of artistic modes" if we read the novels as autobiography rather than as "the purely fictional autobiography that it is" (19).

[2] John Kucich also emphasizes the "theatrical use of 'repression' as a disguise" (69).

[3] In Jane Eyre, St. John Rivers gives Jane a copy of Scott's Marmion. In a letter to Ellen Nussey, Brontë advises her friend that "all novels after his [Scott's] are worthless." In the same letter she also recommends Byron's poetry, although she makes exceptions of Don Juan and Cain (SHLL 1: 122). The Brontës owned works by Scott and Byron as well as Moore's Letters and Journals of Lord Byron (see Gordon 30). In her earlier years, Brontë also drew portraits of Byron and sometimes illustrated his poems, such as "The Maid of Sargossa" (see Barker 213).

[4] "Acted charades" by Mary Mitford appeared from May 1826 through January 1827 in Blackwood's. In these articles Mitford provides the complete texts of several charades.

[5] Blackwood's seems to have been much more drama-oriented than Fraser's. Fraser's carried occasional

articles such as an essay/review by Héraud on historical drama in which he mentions Byron's Cain (July 1832), a more lighthearted piece, "Touching things theatrical" by P.W. Banks (alias "Morgan Rattler") (Sept. 1833) and a very favourable review of Joanna Baillie's Dramas (Feb. 1836). Other articles include "The state of the stage," (February 1838), which is largely about Shakespeare and "Specimens of the drama in France" (Dec. 1838). Blackwood's, by contrast, seems to fairly bristle with articles of a theatrical nature. John Wilson, one of the editors, contributed a series entitled "Analytical essays on the modern English drama" which appeared from October, 1823 to July 1825. While T.D. Thomas discusses the state of the British theatre in "The causes of the decline of the British drama" (Jan.1828), an article on Joanna Baillie in "Celebrated Female Writers" refers favourably to her dramatic works (Aug. 1824). Excerpts from Baillie's dramas appeared in two parts (Jan. 1836-Feb.1836). German drama is well represented in the regular item "Horae Germanica" which includes translations of and commentary on such works as Goethe's Goetz von Berlichingen (Oct. 1824) and Schiller's Wilhelm Tell (March-April 1825). A long and rather vitriolic article about Edmund Kean labels him as one of the worst actors ever to appear on the British stage (Sept 1824).

[6] Lucy refers to her story as a "heretic narrative," a theme Kate Lawson discusses in her essay, "Reading Desire: Villette as "Heretic Narrative." Lawson associates the notion of religious heresy with Lucy's theatricality. As I do, Lawson interprets Villette as a novel informed by division, especially of Lucy's self.

[7] This description is reminiscent of William Talbot's description of images in the camera obscura as "fairy pictures, creations of a moment and destined to fade away" (qtd. in Mitchell 171).

[8] I am indebted to Francesca Kazan, whose concept of "aniconic" imaging in Villette in relation to this scene, was useful to me here.

[9] This Lacanian split, which implicates self-reflection in the simply reflective "mirror of nature" is a significant issue in relation to Brontë's realism. The undoing of the reflection of the other as an externally defined "object," is, I think, always implied in Brontë's mirror images which are, as I argue, not simple reflections but sites of self-performance.

[10] Brontë admired Thackeray as both an artist and a writer. She innocently dedicated the second edition of

Jane Eyre to him, an ill-advised move, since Thackeray's "mad wife" was quickly associated with Bertha. Although she was disappointed in him when they actually met, her admiration of Thackeray's writing was genuine. She considered him a "Titan" among writers. (see SHLL 3: 46). In a letter to W.S. Williams she praises his illustrations: "How he can render with a few black lines and dots, shades of expression so fine, so rare; traits of character so minute, so subtle, so difficult to seize and fix--I cannot tell; I can only wonder and admire" (SHLL 2: 197, qtd. in Barker 552).

[11] I am indebted to Peter Schwenger for directing me to Butler's work.

[12] Gilbert and Gubar make a similar observation about Mdlle. Reuter: "An agent of patriarchy, Zoraïde is slavish to men but despotic to women, especially to women who are not themselves slavish" (326).

[13] See my chapter on Villette for a discussion of Artaud's idea of theatre in relation to Brontë's construction of the female subject.

Chapter III

[1] According to Frances Beer, "The writings of the children were meant for themselves alone, and were kept a strict secret, not only from their later friends and acquaintances, but even from other members of their household: hence the tiny size of the books and their famous microscopic print" (19).

[2] In Christine Alexander's opinion, "Charlotte herself became increasingly obsessed by her hero's sexual magnetism, as he replays Byron's brutality towards his wife and his ruthless manipulation of Caroline Lamb and Claire Clairmont. Not until five years after High Life in Verdopolis does she begin to rid herself of what had become a pathological fascination" (Introduction to High Life in Verdopolis xviii-xix).

[3] Table Talk was available at Keighley Library (see Whone).

[4] Duff, in An Essay on Original Genius (1767), makes clear the connection between the sublimity of the mind and the sublimity of its aesthetic products. As Monk observes, Duff considers the sublime to be "'the proper walk' of a great genius, the only sphere worthy of its powers. . . . An original genius turns naturally to the 'contemplation of the Grand and Wonderful, in nature or in

human life'" (Duff qtd. in Monk 131). The original genius scorns the trivialities of beauty and deals only with "lofty ideas that 'dilate and swell his Imagination'" (Duff qtd. in Monk 131).

Paul Heger, Brontë's teacher in Brussels, also connects genius and the sublime in a comment on one of Brontë's "devoirs" which concerned genius:

> Genius without study, without art, without the knowledge of what has already been done, is strength without the lever . . . it is the sublime musician who has only an untuned piano on which to make the world hear the dulcet melody which resounds in his mind's ear. (qtd. in Lonoff, "Charlotte Brontë's Belgian Essays" 375)

[5] See Walter Houghton, The Wellesley Index (1: 14).

[6] The Brontë Parsonage Museum holds Patrick Brontë's copy of Burke's Inquiry into the Sublime and the Beautiful, published by J.F. Dove in London, 1827. Speaking of Brontë and Mary Taylor at Roe Head School, Ellen Nussey reports that "Miss Wooler set them Blair's 'Belles Lettres' to commit to memory" (SHLL 2: 232).

[7] Brontë herself repudiated this feminized aesthetic in a letter to George Lewes.

> Come what will--I cannot when I write think always of myself--of what is elegant and charming in femininity--it is not on those terms or with such ideas I ever took pen in hand; and if it is only on such terms my writing will be tolerated--I shall pass away from the public and trouble it no more. (SHLL 3: 172)

[8] Although DeLisle is also considered "great in the beautiful" (Alexander "Art and Artists" 180), these passages indicate that he is also associated with a gendered sublime.

[9] Southey made this position amply clear in a letter written in response to some work Brontë had sent him: "Literature cannot be the business of a woman's life, and it ought not to be. The more she is engaged in her proper duties, the less leisure will she have for it even as an accomplishment and recreation" (Southey qtd. in Barker 262).

[10] In "An Interesting Passage in the Lives of Some Eminent Men," for instance, Charles Wellesley informs us:

As I am generally kind to grooms, valets, footmen, lackeys, etc., etc., they often make me their confidant, entrusting me with many important secrets, which by degrees has enabled me to amass such a quantity of information respecting almost every grandee in the Glass Town that, if I chose, I could unveil a scene of murders, thefts, hypocrisy, perjury and so forth which can scarcely be paralleled in the annals of any other city. (EEW 1: 170)

[11] Charles Wellesley includes in "The Scrapbook: Extracted from . . . the 'The Northern Review'" the following scurrilous passage concerning Douro:

> Arthur Wellesley is a prince, the son of a king. . . . Do not start, reader, when we say that he is now a man of narrow but obstinate mind, incapable of managing unassisted the power chance, rather than any exertion of his own, has placed in his hands, but disgustingly jealous of those whom he is obliged to employ as strengtheners of his own weakness. Recover your shortened breath all ye, his admirers, who peruse this daring assertion and then read forwards. (EEW 2.2: 313)

[12] Christine Battersby says of male genius: "Whether the great artist visits brothels, is homosexual, murders his wife, or is simply promiscuous, he can still be celebrated as a great and god-like human being. . . . The genius is unconventional, bohemian, unique--often, like Byron himself, 'mad, bad and dangerous to know'" (Battersby 14).

Chapter IV

[1] According to Smith and Rosengarten, Brontë's manuscript indicates that The Professor was a highly polished work: "Critics who remarked on the 'unchecked naturalness of expression' in The Professor (The Critic 15 June 1857)--a quality also very generally admired in Charlotte's other novels--could not know how much the careful craftsmanship of her manuscript revisions had contributed to the final "natural" effect (xxxv). For a detailed account of the textual history of The Professor, see Smith and Rosengarten's "Textual Introduction" (xxxix-xl).

[2] The "Author's Preface" was written after the publication of Shirley, which she completed in September, 1849, despite the loss of her brother and sisters, who

died while she was writing the novel. Although Brontë managed to finish Shirley because the work offered some relief from her feelings of grief, the devastation of her family left her unable to begin a new work. During this difficult period, as Smith and Rosengarten suggest, Brontë very likely thought of revising The Professor for publication and wrote her "Preface" with this idea in mind.

The Professor was finally published at the instigation of Sir J.K. Shuttleworth, who was enthusiastic about the work, but had some reservations concerning "'certain coarse and objectionable phrases'" (Smith and Rosengarten xxvi). Mrs. Gaskell was also worried that The Professor might undermine the image of Brontë she was creating in her Life. She found The Professor "disfigured by more coarseness--& profanity in quoting texts of Scripture disagreeably than in any of her other works'" (qtd. in Smith and Rosengarten xxvii). George Smith (the head of Smith and Elder, Brontë's publishers) delayed its publication until after the appearance of Gaskell's Life, which was also published by Smith and Elder. Completed in 1846, The Professor finally made its appearance in print on June 6, 1857 (see Smith and Rosengarten xxiii-xxix).

[3] William S. Williams was a reader at Smith and Elder. Although Smith and Elder turned down The Professor when Brontë submitted it, Williams was impressed by Brontë's talent and encouraged her to write another book, which she did. During the publication of Jane Eyre, Williams and Brontë developed a friendly, primarily epistolary relationship which lasted until Brontë's death.

[4] Another incident that associates Crimsworth with the mendacity implied by the word "profession" occurs when Crimsworth offers the "famous excuse," which he employs when he unsuccessfully tries to avoid an encounter with Hunsden. The allusion is, of course, to Peter's denial of Jesus. Jesus himself uses the word to assert his rejection of those who falsely professed faith in him:

> "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven; . . . And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt VII 21-3. Cited in The OED).

[5] Helene Moglen states that Crimsworth "achieves complacency rather than wisdom" (85).

[6] Gilbert and Gubar observe: "As Crimsworth becomes an ever more moralizing master . . . he comes to incarnate a male literary tradition that discourages female writers

even while it seems to encourage inegrity, idealism, and Romantic rebellion against social hypocrisy" (327). Although I do not interpret Crimsworth as a Romantic rebel, their reading of Crimsworth as an aesthetic rival of Frances coincides with mine.

[7] This is Norman Bryson's phrase (150).

[8] Tromly makes the interesting and, I think, valid observation that Frances and Hunsden, under cover of Crimsworth's narration, are actually more than "metaphorical" lovers: "Indeed, the reader--accustomed by now to the alternative possibilities which lurk beneath Crimsworth's narrative--might even wonder if the father-son relationship between Hunsden and Victor is only metaphorical" (39).

Chapter V.

[1] Gilbert and Gubar also note that Thornfield is "the house of Jane's life, its floors and walls the architecture of her experience" (347).

[2] According to Margaret Berg, this passage indicates Jane's "preference for the living 'theatrical' over Crimsworth's . . . deadening 'pictorial'" ("Visual Experience" 133).

[3] Robert Heilman considers Brontë's work "a triumph of intuitive consciousness" ("Charlotte Brontë, Reason, and the Moon" 284-5). Angela Hague, who refers to Heilman, empasizes the importance "Brontë places on nonrational sources of knowledge and the intuitive capabilities of her heroines [Jane Eyre and Lucy Snowe], who are increasingly in touch with the deepest levels of their psyches" (588).

[4] Margaret Homans, in her discussion of the Gothic tradition in Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights suggests that Gothic experience in these novels is a means of indicting the "object world" as a territory that suppresses female creativity. According to Homans,

> The Brontës' ambivalence about the Gothic, in the repeated discovery that real and spirit worlds are inseparable and equally discomfiting, may protest, first, women's position in a dualistic system, and, second the limitations of the tools they have for either leaving that system or altering its character. ("Dreaming of Children" in Fleenor 260)

[5] This is not to say that the experience is not terrifying. As Homan's remarks, Jane's "supernatural" experience of the red-room also constitutes a frightening "realization" of her imaginings (Bearing the Word 93). According to DeLamotte, "Gothic terrors are themselves a mode of transcendence" (141).

[6] John Kucich makes a similar observation. According to Kucich, the "reversibility" of self performance in which the relationships of "master/slave, expression/repression" are inverted "refuses to fix the self, but instead makes inwardness mercurial and fluid" (109).

[7] Here the idea of the enclosure of mind is modified by a connective power capable of uniting mind and being. This is an example of the influence of later theories of mind in nineteenth-century psychology, particularly the influence of physiology and phrenology. An article in Blackwood's (Dec. 1819), "On the Nature of the Imitative Principle and Some Other Faculties, Pointed Out by Gall and Spurzheim" (signed "Peter Morris, M.D."), includes a definition of the concept of assimilation that is reminiscent of the relationship between Rochester and Jane:

> [Assimilation] may be considered as a conductor, stretching forth from the mind, by means of which the sentiments that exist elsewhere pass into us like electrical fire, and are again irradiated from us, and imbibed by the same faculty in other minds. (309)

The same idea is inscribed in Jane's statement that Rochester is of her "kind":

> I feel akin to him,--I understand the language of his countenance and movements: though rank and wealth sever us widely, I have something in my brain and heart, in my blood and nerves, that assimilates me mentally to him. (219)

Here we see an example of the social/mental equality that Shuttleworth associates with phrenology.

[8] My argument here and my analysis of the window seat obviously owe much to Peter Bellis's insightful article, "In the Window-Seat: Vision and Power in Jane Eyre." His position, particularly in relation to the contest of visual modes between Rochester and Jane is very similar to mine:

> is embodied in a conflict between two different modes of vision: a penetrating male gaze that fixes and defines the woman as its object, and a marginal female perception that would conceal or withhold itself from the male. The second alternative begins as a function of social and sexual dependence, but in the course of the novel Brontë redefines it as a position of both visual and narrative authority, the position from which the novel is written. (639)

Bellis also recognizes that the liminal space of the window seat is a site of contiguity between inner and outer: "She [Jane] sits at precisely the point where inside and outside meet, converting a boundary line into a new interior space" (640).

[9] There are many interesting and suggestive interpretations of these paintings, but I tend to agree with Margaret Berg that these images are fundamentally "enigmatic representations" that remain resistant to complete explication and "absorption into the larger story of Jane's 'actual existence'" ("Visual Experience" 140). Like her dreams and visions, Jane's visionary paintings represent the non-rational aspects of cognition that cannot be encompassed by the mechanics of rationalized vision and cognition.

[10] It is fitting, of course, that Blanche, the "accomplished lady," should be represented by a conventionally feminized aesthetic mode: the painted miniature.

[11] For a discussion of moonlight as a symbol of a non-rational, female power see Robert Heilman's "Charlotte Brontë, Reason, and the Moon."

[12] Margaret Homans also interprets the dream child as an oneiric challenge to the self/other construction of the subject: "Splitting the sense of self between child and adult, these dreams question and break down the boundary between subject and object, between self and other" (Bearingthe Word 90).

[13] Many critics have discussed Bertha as Jane's "double." Gilbert and Gubar see her as "Jane's truest and darkest double: she is the angry aspect of the orphan child, the ferocious secret self Jane has been trying to suppress . . . " (36). According to Helen Moglen, Bertha is "the monstrous embodiment of psychosexual conflicts which are intrinsic to the romantic predicament--paralleled and unconscious in both Jane and Rochester"

(124). In an observation that coincides with my own analysis of Bertha's "emergence" Moglen states that Bertha "emerges for the reader through the enlarging stages of Jane's perception" (124). Interestingly, DeLamotte argues that "Bertha's tendency toward the destructive exercise of her pent up faculties is strangely linked with those longings for transcendence that express Jane's highest potential" (213).

[14] DeLamotte also notes this connection between Jane and St. John: "The version of transcendence that St. John offers Jane--participation in his own vocation is particularly dangerous because his own longings for egress and expansion have a strong affinity to Jane's own . . . (216).

[15] Textual references are to page 535 of the Clarendon edition of Jane Eyre.

[16] In her Preface to the novel, Brontë dedicated Jane Eyre to Thackeray.

Chapter VI

[1] Boumelha makes a similar observation, taking into account the significance of Polly's name: "Polly--whose surname, of course, is 'Home'--puts the kettle on; she is a miniaturised version of the domestic and self-abnegating woman . . . "(104).

[2] Sally Shuttleworth also emphasizes the importance of the Panopticon as a model of visual paranoia in Villette:

> The ideal of Bentham's Panopticon, where inmates are trapped, isolated in their cells, subject always to the gaze of authority, without themselves being able to see, might describe the underlying nightmare of Villette from which Lucy is forever trying to escape" (222).

[3] Gilbert and Gubar identify Madame Beck and Madame Walravens as "custodians of male values, agents of patriarchal culture who enforce the subjugation of others" (433).

[4] The inclusion of the "jeunes gens," whose dangerous but well-guarded presence underscores Madame Beck's talent as a "first-rate surveillante," also increases the good reputation of her school. Because of the animation the male presence inspires in the girls, "Madame Beck's fête annually ensured a success unknown to the fête of any other directress in the land" (177).

annually ensured a success unknown to the fête of any other directress in the land" (177).

[5] Interestingly, Polly cherishes Graham's seal which is "like himself," a "full solid steady drop--a distinct impress" . . . (469). Reluctant to break the "beautiful" seal symbolic of Graham's solid selfhood (which has made such a distinct impression on her) Polly carefully "cuts it round" with her scissors (469)--as if to preserve the full power of his "Cyclops" eye.

[6] I am indebted to Boumelha's discussion of emplotment in Brontë's work:

> Brontë's attempts to make narratable the 'secret life' of women, both her plots and what in her novels might be said to resist plotting, compel us to recognize that the legibility of her heroines for realism depends on their imbrication in plotting. What makes them readable for us leads them also to the '"ordinary destiny'" (Shirley, p. 174) of typicality, and so, in a society in which the heterosexual couple has been the site of meaning of women, toward the plot of romance. (17)

[7] Tony Tanner correctly explains the difference between "impressable" and "impressionable": "The distinction seems to involve the difference between registering a sensation on the surface of the senses and allowing it to penetrate and leave a mark on the inner self" (24).

[8] While she denounces this "relish" in herself and determines to "fasten" the "strength and longing" with "the lock of resolution" (174), Lucy's later identification with Vashti as well as her own inner dramatics suggest that, however much she may suppress the longing, her theatrical bent remains an active part of her "nature."

[9] Shuttleworth notes:

> Two works held in the Keighley Mechanics' Institute library offer extensive discussion of the relationship between 'spectral illusion' and insanity: John Abercrombie, Inquiries Concerning the Intellectual Powers (Edinburgh: Waugh and Innes, 1823) and Robert Macnish, The Philosophy of Sleep (Glasgow: W.R. M'Phun, 1830), a work the Reverend Brontë notes in his medical annotations. (Shuttleworth 282 n. 2)

incomprehensibility Lucy claims for Vashti and for herself:

> [Y]et it may be that the constancy of one heart, the truth and faith of one mind according to the light He has appointed, import as much to Him as the just motion of satellites about their planets, of planets about their suns, of suns around that mighty, unseen centre incomprehensible, irrealizable, with strange mental effort only divined. (529)

[11] One of the more striking features of Brussels (on which Villette is based) is the contrast between the Haute Ville, with its neoclassical architecture and rationalized spaces, and the much older Basse Ville, with its labyrinthine streets and Gothic architecture.

[12] John Kucich's discussion of "Brontëan desire," parallels my own and Shuttleworth's:

> Brontëan desire can best be defined as a kind of double movement--on the one hand, toward a secretive, even embattled self-concentration; on the other, toward the continual disruption of this concentrated self by an inward power greater than selfhood, an impersonal power that shatters self-understanding and psychic stability in the exquisite turbulence of contradictory, unresolvable feeling. (51)

Epilogue and Conclusion

[1] My insertion.

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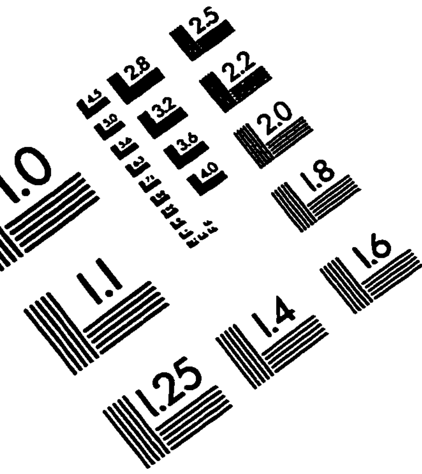
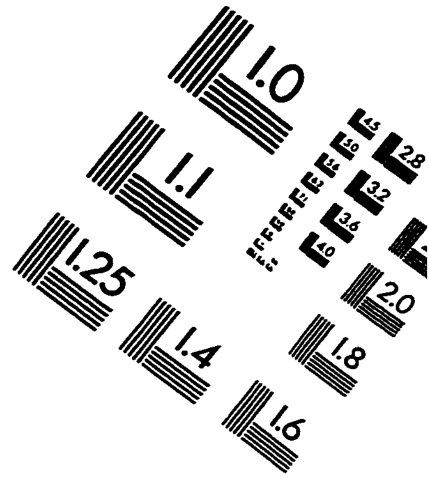
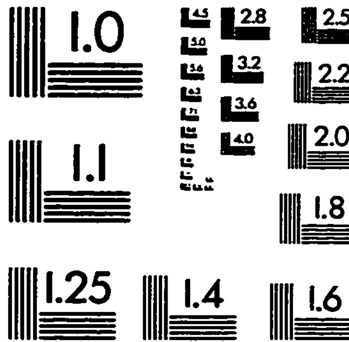

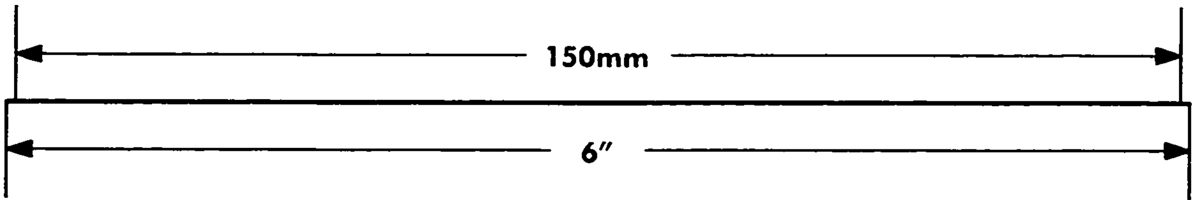

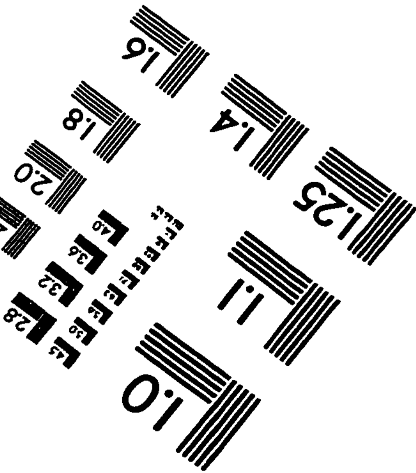
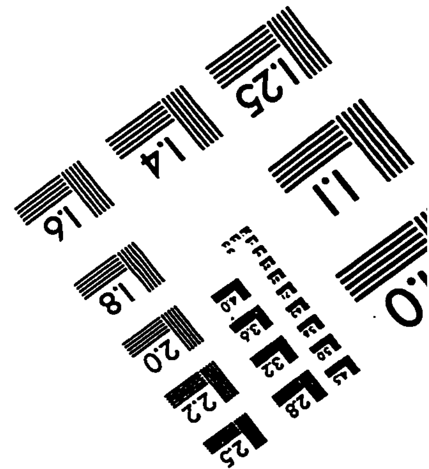

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