THE CHANGING PERCEPTION OF FEMALE AUTONOMY
A STUDY OF THE ENDINGS OF THE NOVELS OF CHARLOTTE BRONTE

Dissertation Submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the award of the Degree of
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

KAREN GABRIEL

CENTRE OF LINGUISTICS AND ENGLISH
SCHOOL OF LANGUAGES
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI — 110067

1988

for my family

and Ranjit

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
School of Languages
Centre of Linguistics and English

Grams : JAYENU
Phones : 667676 / Exts. 269
667557 / & 316

New Delhi-110 067

July 21st 1988

DECLARATION

Certified that the dissertation entitled THE CHANGING PERCEPTION OF FEMALE AUTONOMY: A Study of the Endings of the Novels of Charlotte Bronte, submitted by KAREN GABRIEL in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY, has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other university and is her own work.

We recommend that this dissertation may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

DR. MEENAKSHI MUKHERJEE
Supervisor

DR.MEENAKSHI MUKHERJEE
Chairperson

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank at least some of the people who made this dissertation possible. I am especially grateful to Professor Meenakshi Mukherjee without whose guidance and sense of urgency, this dissertation would still be in the research stages. With affection I remember Padmini's supportive encouragement, Harshita's timely help, Nidhi, and especially Ranjit who wasted countless hours of worry and labour over it. Thanks also to the typist Mrs. Vijayalakshmi Arunachalam.

Karen

[KAREN GABRIEL]

CONTENTS

CHAPTERS — PAGES

1. WOMEN IN VICTORIAN SOCIETY AND FICTION 1
2. *JANE EYRE* : THE NOVEL OF GROWTH 16
3. SOCIAL REALISM AND FEMALE PROTEST IN *SHIRLEY* 51
4. THE SPIRITUAL QUEST OF LUCY SNOWE 93
5. NOTES 127
6. BIBLIOGRAPHY 131

WOMEN IN VICTORIAN SOCIETY AND FICTION

In December 1836, Charlotte Bronte, an unknown literary aspirant wrote a letter to Robert Southey, poet Laureate of England asking him for his opinion on her writing. Two months later she received his reply:

> .....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 she will have for it, even as an accomplishment and a recreation. To those duties you have not yet been called, and when you are, you will be less eager for celebrity...[1]

Southey warned her of two dangers: excessive day-dreaming might idnuce a distemper, making her unfit for the 'proper female duties' and, the improper ambition that writing might generate of becoming a celebrity. Charlotte Bronte (1816-1855), was living at a time when the 'proper female duties' were only domestic ones. Any departure from this was considered an aberration. Charlotte Bronte replied politely and without irony:

> I trust I shall never more feel ambitious to see my name in print; if they wish should rise, I'll look at Southey's letter and suppress it.[1a]

Yet she eventually wrote four novels even though the atmosphere of the time hardly encouraged women in their literary pursuits. Frasers Magazine in 1847, published a long article lamenting that :

literature had become a means of subsistance, and was :

> like the army of Xerxes, swelled by women, children and ill-trained troops. It shall be a Macedonian phalanx — chosen, compact, irresistable.[2]

This explicit contempt of the woman and her work was due to misogynistic scriptural pronouncements and the tendency of the Industrial-Capitalistic society of the 19th century to evaluate human worth mainly in terms of economic productivity or wealth.

With capitalism there came new production processes that involved (1) the division of labour (2) specialisation (3) concentration of large scale production of economic value outside the home. The family ceased to be a unit of production. A strong demarcation was made between the home and the work place, the latter becoming an area of significant economic and material production - the territory of men. The home became the woman's preserve entirely and with the new growing emphasis on big money and capital, it was devalued economically and women were marginalised and accorded merely decorative and moral status. This rigid differentiation shifted the onus of preserving morality completely on the woman. The home thus, was

perceived as a functioning unit of stability amidst the social chaos caused by class mobility, widening suffragate and the growing threat to religion. Increasing materialism gave rise to a vulgar, decadant commercialization and mechanization, a degradation of the human spirit, and soon the woman and the home were saddled with the additional function of preserving culture.

The Victorians looked with weary disillusionment on what they had wrought in their cities. London, the symbol of progress and civilization at one time, "the fountain of my country's destiny and the destiny of earth itself", [Prelude- VIII,ll 746-748.], the celestial city, became Ruskin's London:

> ...The furnaces of the city foaming forth perpetual plague of sulphurous darkness; the volumes of their storm clouds coiling low over a waste of grassless fields.[3]

The decay of the city became a metaphor for its moral decrepitude and the home became the new earthly paradise and the women the 'angel of the house'. The literature of the age, reflecting this belief termed her as "the Good Angel of the race" [The Old Curiosity Shop, 1841 Ch.19].

the Ministering Angel to domestic bliss". [The Mystery of Edwin Drood 1870, Ch.22] "The good Angel inviting to industry, sobriety and peace [George Eliot, Silas Marner 1861 Ch.3]. Conventary Patmore epitomized this mythification of the woman in his long poem 'The Angel in the House'[1854-63] . The 'angel' ideology was prompted by the sole objective of ensuring the domesticity and submission of the woman, after evaluating how the altered status of the woman would influence the perceived needs and ends of a society undergoing rapid changes and stresses. For instance, if women were employed outside the home, they would be deprived of the time and environment required to learn the domestic skills necessary for setting up a home after marriage. Besides, who would look after the home if they continued working after marriage? The battle to keep women away from work it must be emphasized, was an ideological one for in capitalism no separation of the woman from work is envisaged. As Legouvé pointed out in 1850:

> woman lives upon the earth...wealth may occasionally allow her... poetic leisure and youth...but wealth, beauty and grace belong only to a select few or last for a few short years.

> And for three-fourths of the life of a woman the sovereign law of labour is demanded by her as a boon, or submitted to by her as a necessity.[4]

The situation of women in Victorian society was full of paradoxes and contradictions. On the one hand there was a subtle cultural pressure on women to be idle and merely exert a vague moral force to keep the family pure, on the other hand the vigorous work-ethic of the time made sure that they were marginalized because of their non-productivity. In actual fact however, the majority of women were working hard though not always earning very much money. Women worked at home, in factories and as governesses. Yet the literature of the nineteenth century, particularly the novel, persisted in projecting the convenient image of a woman who was idle. This contradiction may be explained to a limited extent by the fact that the literature of the period dealt by and large, with the bourgeoisie, and neglected the lives of the working class people except as counterpoints. The upper and middle class woman in England was idle, pampered and in a way entirely superfluous for the economy of the country. However

this idleness was often enforced. In order to silence uneasy, difficult questions on working women, womanhood was sundered into the water — tight categories of 'angles' and 'whores'. In 1857 Milne wrote:

> People when they draw an ideal picture of woman, especially poets transport her from all contact with material life. A lover, a virgin, an angel, a young and beautiful woman - these terms so diverse, unite in representing a being who scarce touches the earth with the tips of her wings, whose feet do not walk, whose hands do not work... and what is it to ask for an opening for a woman in a professional career, but to pluck off those wings... to expose her to miscellaneous gaze, to burden her with the fatigues of life.[5]

The angel was strictly confined within domestic walls and interests. She flitted silently and gracefully about the house disseminating love, happiness and

peace, rendering perpetual service, anticipating and answering needs. Never demanding or complaining, she lived in a state of constant, whole-hearted self-sacrifice and generosity. The effects of this idealogy were manifold. Apart from falsely inscribing the woman's incompatibility with work, her natural penchant for service, it represented feminity as an impossible ideal creating in the women a nagging feeling of failure and diffidence. Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre rejects and mocks this angelic woman: Jane declares "I am not an angel and will not be one till I die' and in Shirley(1849), Shirley says "their [men's] good woman is a queer thing, half-doll, half-angel" [P.278] . But most other writers upheld this view. Dickens believed that the forces of good were concentrated in the woman and constructed girl-child angels, virginal ethereal and devoted to either father or husband. Little Dorrit, Esther Summerson and Sissy Jupe are all of ministering type. These pristine, madonna standards were sternly demanded of the women, who attempted to fulfil them because the alternatives to the 'angel' was the 'whore'.

The inclusive category of 'whore' encompassed both the painted, culpable whore- the lascivious

creature who exuded, surrendered to and satisfied sexuality, and the masculine professional woman - tainted and depraved by her contact with the world. Jane Fairfax in Jane Austen's Emma (1916) is pitied by others and herself, because of the prospect of her being a governess. Mrs. Pryor a governess in Shirley, (1849) tells Caroline: "the gentlemen regarded me as a tabooed woman...the servants ... detested me."[p.297] In an effort to keep the woman firmly in her place, away from professions and power , working conditions were made impossible. Charlotte and Anne Brontë both wrote bitterly about the "sedentary, solitary, constrained, joyless toilsome" life of the working women. However, there were a few who had become successful and happy professionals. In 1860, Florence Nightingale became Britain's leading adviser on medical administration. For the next four years, every issue connected with health and sanitation were referred to her. Nightingale rejected both marriage and domesticity as insufficient to her needs and incompatible with her aims. After receiving a proposal from Richard Milnes, she wrote to a friend:

> I could not satisfy this nature by spending a life with him making society, and arranging domestic things.[6]

This highly ambitious woman entered professionalism mainly for self-fulfilment. However, society dealt with such deviant behaviour of woman efficiently by mythologising her. This moved Florence Nightingale away from the role of a highly qualified professional into a ministering angel.

The category opposed to the angel was the prostitute, the most despised of all women. George Watts in The Fallen Women in Victorian Fiction says that there were as many as eighty thousand prostitutes in England in the mid-ninteenth century who had a thriving business. Obviously the men who condemned them publicly supported them privately. Men excused their own immorality by declaring that their visits to brothels were necessary for the preservation of moral and social stability. Kieth Nield writes :

> In absorbing the destructive excess of intemperate , overwhelming male sexuality, it was sometimes argued that the prostitute not only prolonged the marraige relationship, but created conditions as a result, which favoured the smooth transfer of property through unbroken inheritance and the stable family.[7]

Sexuality that was essential to masculinity was abhorrant in the woman. If the male was uneasy in his hypocricy it was largely due to his fear that his own woman might turn unchaste in his absence. To ensure the purity of his home he shifted the onus of maintaining sexual morality on to the woman.

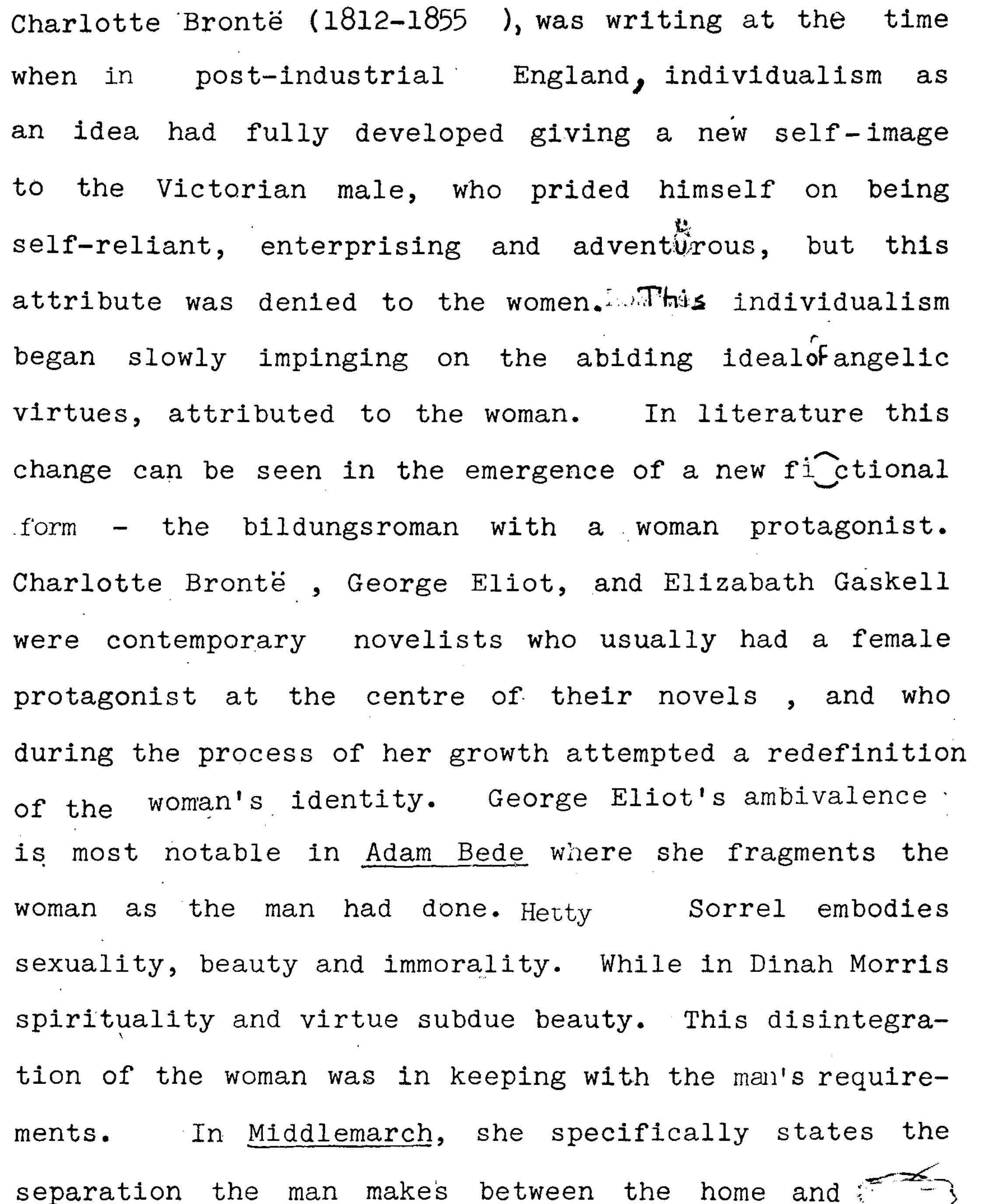
The conviction in the woman's natural purity and asexuality that fitted her for the role of moral guardian was deepened by Darwin who scientised the secular belief that women are radically different from men. His argument was based as much on the biological inferiority of woman as on her moral and spiritual superiority. However, protection from outside immoral destructive forces was necessary to permit her to be an efficient angel. Ruskin in Queen's Gardens questions: "How is the idea of the guiding function of the women reconcilable with true wifely subjection?"

Darwin's Descent of Man [1871], though it was not overtly stated to be so, was a response to John Mill's Essay on The Subjection of Women (1866). Mill had contested the theory of subjugation to man. He insisted that the real nature of woman can only be

known if women are freed of present controls and prohibitions and are given rational freedom. This is an echo of Wollstonecraft's argument in 1793 against Rousseau's claim that female education would result in the woman's decreasing power over the man. Wollstonecraft had responded to Rousseau by saying: "I do not wish them to have power over men, but over themselves". [A Vindication of the Rights of Woman p.69]

This splintered view of womankind had the effect of producing in the women writers of the time an ambivalence towards their own sex. They accepted the man's valuation of their sex and yet at the same time there was a growing resentment towards his tyranny. Women writing as professionals were accepted, but:

> where the path is open, ideological problems are not axiomatically solved. They had not entered the process of literary representation with the minds like clean slates. They had behind them the entire weight of mythology and history from the Fall onward that inscribes the women as culpable. At stake in the myth of the Fall was not merely female culpability for the exile from Paradise, but



> the issue of Eve's innate inferiority to Adam.[8]

Charlotte Brontë (1812-1855), was writing at the time when in post-industrial England, individualism as an idea had fully developed giving a new self-image to the Victorian male, who prided himself on being self-reliant, enterprising and adventurous, but this attribute was denied to the women. This individualism began slowly impinging on the abiding ideal of angelic virtues, attributed to the woman. In literature this change can be seen in the emergence of a new fictional form - the bildungsroman with a woman protagonist. Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, and Elizabath Gaskell were contemporary novelists who usually had a female protagonist at the centre of their novels, and who during the process of her growth attempted a redefinition of the woman's identity. George Eliot's ambivalence is most notable in <u>Adam Bede</u> where she fragments the woman as the man had done. Hetty Sorrel embodies sexuality, beauty and immorality. While in Dinah Morris spirituality and virtue subdue beauty. This disintegration of the woman was in keeping with the man's requirements. In <u>Middlemarch</u>, she specifically states the separation the man makes between the home and [illegible]

work place, through Lydgate. Though she challenges the sinner-saint bifurcation of womanhood, she still tends to construct the women as culpable. Lydgate neglects the home, misunderstands Rosamund and is often 'despotic'. But throughout Eliot suggests that Rosamund is somehow responsible for his faults. Lydgate is chastised, but Eliot also subtly shifts the responsibility away from him:

> Rosamund's discontent in her marriage was due to the condition of marriage itself, to its demands of self-suppression and tolerance, and not to the nature of her husband.

Elizabath Gaskell was more radical announcing the need for redefining sexuality and morality. Ruth was burnt when it was published, and Mary Barton was descried. Though Gaskell was unnerved by the way these books were received she firmly asserted: "I knew all this [would happen] before, but I was determined notwithstanding, to speak my mind about it ... I could do every jot of it over again tomorrow."[9]

Charlotte Brontë was much more subtle in her subversion . In her novels with female protagonists, Jane Eyre (1847), Shirley (1849), and Villete (1853), she

rejects the conventional role of the female entirely. Sexual and emotional fulfilment are both central to the complete development of the woman. Despite their overt sexuality, both Jane Eyre and Lucy Snowe are deeply moral too. There is an attempt to integrate the different qualities that had been splintered in the popular imagination to create a whole believable woman. It should be noted that unlike Jane Austen's heroines, Charlotte Brontë's protagonists are all fatherless. They have no firm position in the patriarchal social structure, and no inherited property. They have to make a place for themselves entirely on their own through their own tenuous effort. Jane Austen's women never need to work - even Jane Fairfax finally escapes the 'governess trade' through timely marriage - but Brontë makes sure that her heroines work not only for survival but for a redefinition of self. By insisting on self-fulfilling work for the woman, Brontë took away the image of abnegation and asserted instead the need for autonomy.

The three novels discussed in this dissertation examine how Brontë articulates and develops the concept of female autonomy, rejecting implicitly and explicitly

the popular image of the woman that was prevalent. In her first adult novel The Professor [completed in 1846 published in 1857], Brontë used a male protagonist- William Crimsworth. Although he often articulates Brontë's views on women and resembles her later heroines closely, he escapes their crises by virtue of his sex. This novel has not been discussed in this dissertation, as its structural and thematic premises differ seriously from those of the other novels. There is a marginal but significant difference even in the genre. The primary concern here is to examine the female Bildungsroman, and unlike her other three novels, The Professor is a novel that records the growth of a male protagonist.

JANE EYRE: THE NOVEL OF GROWTH

In her preface to The Professor (1857), when Bronte said that the novel was the outcome of a "pen worn a good deal in a practice of some years" [p.2] she was referring to her literary appreticeship which spanned a period of ten years during which the Angrian tales were composed. These juvenile works written jointly with her brother Branwell between 1829-1839, were published posthumously as Twelve Adventurers and Other Stories [1925], The Legends of Angria [1933], and Five Novelettes [1971]. The Angrian tales, a series of individual manuscripts that form component parts of a complex saga, deserve attention because the seeds of the technical, moral and thematic development of her novels can be traced back to them. Branwell Bronte, preoccupied with the intricacies of polilitical power, outlined elaborate complex plots which, as they were initially alimented by history, had Charlotte's favourite, the Duke of Wellington as their hero. These romances were particularized with imagined details of past and present, political and military history - the conflicts that occur with the building of the Glastown confderacy, the founding of the West African Kingdom of Angria , invasion suppression of rebellions, and the assertion of

state authority. In 1931, the collaboration ruptured because Charlotte joined Roe Head as a student. Branwell continued expanding the saga, keeping Charlotte informed on every development. When Charlotte returned from Roe Head, the collaboration underwent a drastic change of events in both political and domestic spheres. Lord Douro, who is later referred to as Zamorna, as he gained in importance, altered slowly, becoming more and more Byronic in his magnetic power over women and in his Cavalier attitude to them. Slowly the now notorious Zamorna replaced his father as the final hero of Angria . With this change, the historicity of Angria defers to romance. A new literary terrain is mapped out, and with the removal of historical constraints, the shift to romance is complete and the young authors are no longer bound by any laws of causality or reality. Despotic genii who intervene at the authors convenience, permit the occurance of incidents that ought to have resulted in the early termination of the saga. They retract events, resurrect the dead, and are called upon to direct decisions of characters, thereby freeing them from moral and intellectual

responsibilities .

Northrope Frye's definition of romance as "the nearest of all literary forms to the wish-fulfilment dreams" , is qualified by Karen Chase who says that :

> Romance cannot simply involve wish-fulfilment, no more than tragedy can involve a fall.... tragedy is a structured fall, and .... we may consider romance a structured wish. If romance loses its structure, it becomes simply a cycle of desire and gratification, then it collapses into primitive fantasy: extravagent wishes fulfilled extravagently - just as tragedy if it looses its structure, declines into bathos.[1]

Angrian romance for ever threatens to fall into primitive fantasy as reality in Angria is tractable. The absence of psychological complexity and personal restraint or any functioning moral system mark this world. Angria is not a society, but a mob of individuals unconstrained by law

and punishment. The characters are distinguished by the smouldering violence that sometimes gains physical expression, but which consistantly drives the men in particular, to brutalize others psychologically. These unidimensional, unarticulated characters have constant unrestrained desires which they relentlessly seek to fulfil either themselves or through good or bad genii. The incessant activity involved in the gratification of these desires replaces psychological complexity. This simplicity of this world is countered by complex political maneouvres and the sexual conflicts that keep Angria from declining into primitive fantasy. Because of the psychological simplicity of characters, inter-gender distinctions sharpen, while intra-gender distinctions blur . All the male protagonists are typically Byronic - towering, agonisingly handsome men - who despise women as much as they love power, Zamorna the most satanic, handsome and irresistable of all, disregards women the most. Percy is "polished" but "his mind is decietful, bloody and cruel". Zamorna is a

> keen, glorious being [whose] glancing [eyes] bode no good]....Satan gave them glory to deepen the midnight gloom that always follows where their lustre fallne most lovingly.(* F.N. p.26)

In contrast all the Angrian women were beautiful, totally machinated both intellectually and sexually, and consequently deeply unhappy. Repeatedly exploited and wounded by the men, helpless in their pain, they adapt themselves to masochism. The Angarian men, and especially Zamorna, in their overwhelming desire for onnipotence, seek to destroy what they love. In this aspect Rochester in Jane Eyre resembles the Byronic hero unmistakably. He would rather reduce Jane to the moral and physical decrepitude of Bertha than let her go. Robert Moore in Shirley has Zamorna's capacity for sexual torment and indifference. Only emasculation of some sort restore to him a modicum of humanity. Charlotte thrusts Zamorna into a series of explicit adulterous love affairs from which he emerges unscathed, scattering in his promiscuous wake, scores of beautiful broken-hearted mistresses who ever-loyal and totally reduced, pine hopelessly. The extreme unhappiness, the masochism and cloistering of heroines permeates these stories.

* (Five Novellettes. In future F.N.)

The heroines are defined by their lonliness and desolation.

> sometimes, when she was alone of an evening walking through her handsome drawing room by twilight, she would think of home - long for home till she cried passionately at the conviction that she would see it no more. So wild was her longing...."[F.N., p.165].

TH-2887

Devoid of self-esteem, they depend completely and helplessly on the cruel men who desert them casually. They expect and meet with rejection. It is apparent that love for them, as it was for most Victorian women, was not fulfilment, but a rationalisation of self-denial and misuse. Tormented by Zamorna and Percy, eclipsed completely by their egoistical solipsistic love, the woman ceases to exist as an independent, identity and becomes wholly male identified. Mina Laury is described as having:

Diss
O,111,3,M16;9
M8

> but one idea-Zomorna! Zamorna! It had grown up with her - become a part of her nature - absence - coldness - total neglect ... went for nothing. She could no more feel alientation from him than she could from herself. [F.N., p.143]

"It is because she is too alienated from herself, that she dreads alienation from him",[2] despite the pain and humiliation he causes.

There is no countervailing moral voice - external or internal - to oppose male desire. This structural and thematic simplicity of Angria causes a "narrative stasis" which later demands an adjustment of its premises: sadistic, immoral omnipotent men and masochistic submissive women interacting in a cyclic world.

> In literature as in life, only when desire fails to secure its immediate fulfilment does some amount of psychological complexity begin.[3]

In Angria, those who are permanently deprived and violated are the women. Hence it is in them that, towards the end of the series, a spasmodic psychological complexity begins to develop. When Mary expresses both love and hate for Zamorna, she is expressing an experience of self-division. This self-division brings to the women a turbid, inarticulate realisation

that they victimise themselves as much as they are victimized; that they alone can stake their claim to freedom and maturity. Mary Percy abandoned by Zamorna, shamed by her traitor father Northangerland, and manipulated by both, arrives at a sense of separateness and outrage:

> What am I? I am not an atom in the scale of existence.... if Northangerland and Zamorna make me the link between them, must not I, who have a separate existence, urge my separate claims...? [F.N. p.60]

The passive and monotonous acceptance of selfish male manipulation has given way to a brief feeble sense of autonomy. This spirit of independence should not be overestimated because like her fictional successors Frances Henri in The Professor, Jane Eyre, Caroline and Shirley in Shirley, what Mary ultimately desires is emotional surrender. However, it is an important indication of Brontë's growing awareness of the ambiguities and conflicts of the female psyche. This sensitivity towards the female predicament was occassioned by Brontë's growing ambivalence

towards the Byronic hero, the development of her individual genius and an increasing creative distances between Branwell and herself. Her reaction against the seductive appeal of romance led to greater realism and deeper psychological insight.

With a wane in the simplicity of female submission, the Angrian women slowly assume ascendancy over the male. When Mary dies, the land and the Angrian world die with her. Further, she begins to jar in the Angrian world of self denial and abandonment. Dissatifaction yields resistance and then growth, and this is why the attention to the condition of women points the way out of the Angrian romance. There must be not just a rival mode of characterisation but a rival mode of fiction - the Bildungs roman.

Charlotte Brontë's brilliant success with female characters and her debut into the realistic mode of fiction were the logical outcome of her juvenilia that engendered a growing anxiety about the nature of love and the status of the woman within

that relationship. The already articulated need for and problem of female autonomy in a sexual relationship acquires more urgency and Brontë's adult works attempt a plausible reconciliation of autonomy and emotional submission. Her belief in the destructiveness of male sexuality was never revised and this accounts for the fluctuation in the attitude of her later heroines towards the hero.

No longer is romantic love the only centre of her fictional world - it is now shared with a second urgent concern: the determined pursuit of individual autonomy. Along with this shift in concerns, there is a change of protagonist who is no longer the consummately powerful male; but the initially powerless female. Only from a position of deprivation and weakness can growth begin. Both the novels shifting concerns and the change in protagonist neccessitate a new mode of presentation, a different mode of fiction. The cyclic world of romance with its' fixed gender stereotypes is inadequate to the fictional task of representing a thinking, developing woman trying to reconcile the two

important urges for autonomy and emotional fulfilment. The new adult theme has growth built into it and so the new fictional mode will be the Bildungsroman.

The novel of growth requires an additional adjustment - a shift from the incessantly active physical world to the intricate private realms of the mind and Brontë makes it. She is now attentive to emotional nuances and elements of self division. Her career is a continuing process in moving from the outward to the inward life. Her final novel Villette, the outcome of an obssessively reiterated and reworked theme, poses the problem in its most inward and spiritual form - stressing the need for autonomy at various levels more than any other work. It is important to state that in her adult works, Brontë explores the psychical convolutions and ambiguities of the female mind alone as it develops and attempts to integrate its contradictions. The theme of the novel, the mode of the Bildungsroman and the fact of the female protagonist are all bound inextricably together: Jane is initially weak so that she can grow strong, so

that there can be Bildungs. This chapter seeks to deal with queries that arise about the extent to which Jane Eyre is a Bildungsroman. It further attempts to analyse the end of the novel to explore how successful the author is in integrating the protagonist's conflicting inclinations. This will help us to assess the author's growth as well.

Technically, Jane Eyre qualifies as a Bildungsroman, for Brontë has broken out of the structural and thematic stasis of the Angrian romances and the movement in the novel is now linear and progressive, from childhood to the maturity of its protagonist. Jane's departure from Gateshead for instance, in addition to furthuring the plot, signals a metaphoric journey on the road to self discovery. Jane's journey is similar in its solitariness to that of Lucy Snowe's, the protagonist of Villette for who is alone in the hostile world till the very end. Jane is isolated in the malevolent Reed household, orphaned among the orphans at Lowood, alone and endangered in the stringency of her morality at Thornfield. Though she finds kinship and acceptable company at

Moor house, her emotional solitude continues until she goes back to Rochester. Jane always makes her decisions alone; consulting only an inner moral voice. At times she is divided evenagainst herself, resenting and suppressing a very real but dangerous other self. All the novels have this distinct sense of the self standing in isolation poised above nothingness. However, the manner of self discovery varies from novel to novel. Jane Eyre is distinguishable from Villette in having a perfectly linear progressive movement. Jane never suffers the very real psychological reversals that set - back Lucy Snowe. This neatly structured linearity of development along with the author's attempt to harmonise dichotomies conclusively, make Jane Eyre appear closer to a romance in comparison with the uncompromisingly realistic Villette. It is even possible to question if Jane Eyre is a growth novel at all, and if the protagonist arrives at any degree of self-knowledge at the end of the narrative.

Karen Chase in her book Eros and Psyche, maintains that the only change in Jane's character

is made at Loweed when she is eight years old-when she decides to discipline herself.

> What we call Jane Eyre's development is as much the deliquescence around her. The novel is full of personal catastrophe - madness, maiming, suicide, death - none of these befalls Jane, but in occurring to those about her, they work to consolidate her once fragile position.[4]

The critic's suggestion that there is no actual development in Jane oversimplifies the narrative structure of the novel, and denies a plausible alternative explanation of the deliquescence of the secondary characters in the novel.

Although heavily laced with romance, the novel is definitely a Bildungsroman, and not just structurally so. Jane does grow and this growth may be measured by (1) the efficacy with which she confronts representatives of patriarchy, (2) the credibility of the final integration of her sexuality, morality and autonomy. Jane can achieve this

only after a fair amount of self analysis and introspection. She successfully confutates threatening patriarchal figures and her defiance is recorded as development both explicitly by the author and implicitly through the sub-text. Before tracing this development, an attempt will be made to contextualize Brontë's quest for integrating feminine sexuality autonomy and submissiveness by looking at the prevalent Victorian ideology on woman. The Victorians affected a dictotomy in the image of the woman by categorising her as either the "angel" or the culpable "whore". Sexuality which was an essential element of the masculine ideal becomes abhorrant in the woman. Seen against this background, Jane Eyre, seeking to integrate this binary view of women, seems so brave and radical a creation.

The nineteenth century readers unsettled not only by the plainness of this heroine of a romance, her provincial placement and inarticulateness of speech, but even more by the indecorus presentation of this woman's love affair, were shocked into written protest. Harriet Martineau

attacked the novel for its "outrages on decorum", and for the author's sympathy for feminine independence; for it is in the "daily rounds of simple duties and pure pleasures"[5] that a woman's true happiness and satisfaction lay, she was joined by the reviewer of the Christian Rememberancer in her diatribe. It was disconcerting enough to find that a "poor, obscure plain and little"[p.281] badly dressed Jane as the heroine, but the fact that she lived under the same roof as the unusual and passionate Rochester outraged their sense of propriety. The outrage was perhaps also due to a partial recognition of the subversive authorial intent. A.W. Foublanque recognising this, called Brontë "the champion of the weaker party"[6] in The Examiner. The novel presents a woman who acknowledges her sexuality and seeks its gratification, while rejecting the label of 'whore' for herself. Jane Eyre argues for a revised notion of womanhood and female individuality and rejects the assumption of automatic male dominance. It seeks to offer a new vision of sexual mutuality. Whether Brontë is successful in doing so will be considered later. How convincing then is Karen Chase's view that Jane is

ultimately a static character appearing to grow through others decline?

Jane's growth is articulated through the symbolic movement away from Gateshead where she was situated at the depths of female victimage. Orphaned, penniless and dependent she comes to realise her total impotence in her first encounter with a small but potent agent of patriarchy, John Reed the sole male member of the Reed household. Assaulted physically and psychologically by him, she finally arrives at a sense of a righteous outrage and retaliates. But while John's aggression is seen as rightful, Jane's long overdue reaction is labelled as unnatural and dangerous. This is Jane's first rebellion against authority to assert her selfhood. She is locked into the "Red Room" by Mrs.Reed who tells her that she will escape punishment "only on condition of perfect submission and stillness."[p.49]. This, the first of a series of conventional definitions of womanhood that Jane examines and rejects partially or totally, is an attempt to make her the "angel". The process of growth and self-definition begins immediately after her cloistering in the "Red-Room" which symbolises the womb. Though she refuses submission,

Jane does realise the importance of self control and sets out to cultivate it. From Gateshead, Jane goes to Lowood where she encounters people with varied views on morality and spirituality. One of these is the totally self-abnegating Helen Burns. Helen serves the twin fictional purpose of being an antithesis to Jane by providing an ideal of self abnegation against Jane's tenacious self assertion, as well as a model for self discipline and forbearance. Jane examines and appreciates Helen's values but rejects for herself the deprivatory effacement of Burns' life. Neither of them understands the other. Helen reproaches Jane for her curiosity: " You ask rather too many question"]P.83], her attachment to worldly values: "you think too much of the love of a human" [P.101] and, her aggression:" You are ...too vehement"[ibid], Angry at Satcherd's treatment of Helen, Jane, exclaims

> I should resist her, if she struck me with that rod, I should get it from her hand, I should break it under her nose.[P.88]

Helen in response advices moderation and discipline while bearing all "what it is your fate

to be required to bear".[p.88]. Patience requires a rationalisation of repression that Jane has already tried at Gateshead and given up. This rejection is Brontë's explicit departure from the Angrian world where women accept suffering unquestioningly. Self-abnegation is good, but only upto a point as Burns' death suggests. It is this limit that Brontë explores through Jane, Helen and Rivers. Helen Burns's name suggests both suffering and passion. Her life could be both heroic through self-affirmation and martyr-like in its self-abnegation. Because Burns approves of self-abnegation, she succeeds in asserting herself through it. She refuses to compromise the claims of the spirit with those of the world. Her submission to spiritual demands is much too literal and she moves to a saintly though wasteful death, dying as she does out of physical neglect. Rivers negotiates between temporality and spiritualism as well- his self denial is linked with the desire to reap everlasting profits. The spiritual life he opts for answers both his need for self assertion and abnegation. But what about Jane? For her, life as a missionary would be pure martyrdom unrelieved by any self-fulfilment.

It is only in marriage that Jane can combine spiritual interests and self assertion. Self-assertion is possible only when the initiative is her own. Jane and Rivers are antithetical to Burns because they do mediate between the material and the spiritual. Jane opting for a life with Rochester rather than a life as a missionary with Rivers may be considered as an act of selfishness, but the more important question is; how does Bronte view it? Terry Eagleton in Myths of Power points out, that in Bronte's scheme of things:

> a prudent refusal to yield [the self] prematurely in ways which might lead to reach dissipation rather than increase and enrichment.[p.24].

is the wisest, most fruitful kind of existence. Jane's physical trials are not ancillary to her moral tests. She survives severe ill-treatment at Gateshead, the epidemic at Lowood, the trying flight from Thornfield, and escapes the subsequent retribution that comes down on its unmates. Her tenacious body and the prudence with which she yields herself ensure her survival through the psychic and moral ordeals she faces. Throughout the novel, Jane is motivated by prudence and

not by selfishness. However, prudence comes only with discipline and so despite her uneasiness and misgivings Jane accepts Burns' advice to inculcate discipline within herself, but conditionally. This discipline is partly forced on her by Brocklehurst who is described in distinctly phallic imagery — "a black pillar" [P.63] — and who, apart from representing religion at its hypocritical worst, is an oppressive patriarchal force In a pompous declaration of conventionality, he declares his mission to serve a master:

> Whose kingdom is not of this world....to mortify in these girls the lusts of the flesh, to teach them to clothe themselves with shamefacedness and sobriety, not with braided hair and costly apparel[p.96]

By ordering the cropping of their hair, he desexualises and dehumanises them in a single stroke. Jane's lessons in self-discipline get increasingly rigorous. After Burns' death and Brocklehurst's downfall, the discipline is moderated and directed under Miss Temple, the surrogate mother, who influences Jane the most. It is Temple's influence that makes Jane

understand the value of the conjunction between human affection and spirituality and this awareness makes her subsequent rejection of Rivers possible.

Jane's decision to leave Lowood after Miss Temple's, departure, is a decision to reject an imposed role of passivity that Jane has painfully imbibed, and an assertion of herself over Brocklehurstian patriarchy. Since this role is forced on her it is inauthentic and is easily shrugged off. So when Temple leaves, Jane muses:

> Another discovery dawned on me, namely that I had undergone a transforming process; that my mind had put off all it had borrowed off Miss.Temple. I was now left in my natural element [and began] to feel the stirrings of old emotions .... I remembered the world was wide and that a varied field of hopes and fears, sensation and excitements awaited those who had the courage to go forth into its vast expanse and seek knowledge of life amidst its perils [p.116][emphasis mine]

Discipline engenders its' own difficulties: "the constraints of a moderate and tranquil life". Rebellion then is born through repression

and there are the "stirrings of old emotions". Passion, rebellion and indiscipline surge through Jane in response to the urges for incident, fire , feeling that she had "desired and had not had in all [her] actual existence . Bertha Mason, Rochester, and Thornfield with its cavernous interior, its dark dangers and mysterious fires are brought forth. They appear to be congealings of Jane's urges.[8]

The meeting with Rochester is one cycle in the novels dialectical pattern of confrontation with patriarchy, that begins with John Reed. They all function as trials from which Jane emerges with enhanced self-esteem and greater self-knowledge. It is in her conquest of these patriarchal tyrants that Jane's growth when evaluated, is recognisably positive. She encounters all the major threats to her integrity subsequently and remains whole. The encounter with Rochester is one such trial of her autonomy, and it proves to be the most dangerous of all for soon he becomes to her :

> my whole world, almost my hope of heaven. He stood between me and every thought of religion as an eclipse intervenes between man

> and broad sunlight. I could not in those days see God for His creature of whom I had made an idol. [p.302].

As the analogy with the eclipse suggests, that Rochester's influence and presence are dark and negative. Not only does Rochester blind her morally, but he confines her more sinisterly and insiduously than either Gateshead or Lowood. Rochester is attracted by Jane's uniqueness - her forthright ways, her sound intellect - yet he consistantly views her in conventional images. She is his 'angel', a 'sprite' , a 'fairy', 'an elf', but never the earthly fallible woman Jane knows herself to be. Resisting this confinement into conventional feminine types, she protests:

> I am not an angel and will not be one till I die. I will be my-self. Mr. Rochester, you must neither expect nor extract anything celestial from me.... I had rather be a thing than an angel.[p.291]

with this utterence, Jane pronounces one of the most explicit attacks on the Victorian 'angel' ideology.

Rochester's attempts at appropriation become more sinister after their engagement when he attempts to trans--form her with charms, bracelets and rings , dress her up in silks and airy lace, all symbols of servitude and objectification. Jane, recognising their significance and humiliated by the implicit rejection of what she is, refuses to accept them. Instead retaining her job , she writes to her uncle to inquire about her independent income. She further insists on preserving the fortunate distance of the master-employee relationship. Her refusal to become economically dependent on Rochester is prompted by morality as much as by good sense. Early in life at Gateshead, Jane came to understand very well the repercussions of economic dependency when Bessie told her:

> You ought not to think of yourself in equality with misses and master Reed.....They will have a great deal of money and you will have none. It is your place to make yourself humble and agreeable to them.[p.45] [emphasis mine]

Economic difference creates both social division and sexual hierarchy. By accepting Rochester's keep,

Jane will forgo her autonomy and effectively thrust herself back into the Gateshead situation of dependence and impotence .

Rochester's patriarchy is most virulent, when, by attempting to perpetrate a severe moral fraud on Jane, he devalues her completely as a thinking independent, moral being, He does this fully aware of her stringent morality and the position she will be reduced to by a bigamous marriage. This is a regression to the Angrian male model and Rochester's retributive fire-purging seems necessary to make him worthy of Jane. Not only does he have to atone for his attempted bigamy, but also for the moral myopia which equates Jane with his other mistresses. He wants to use Jane just an he has used the other women he has known. Rochester believes that marriage to Jane who is pure, will bring him redemption. In his self-defeating selfishness he does not realize that for redemption , repentance and an acceptance of moral and spiritual codes is necessary. Entering into a relationship as depraved, and morally barren as his previous ones is no sign of genuine remorse. Brontë uses symbolism brilliantly to suggest Rochester's continuing immorality sub-textually . Up till the moment

Jane leaves Rochester his eyes "flash fire". Rochester's eyes, like Blanche Ingram's, are the mirror of his soul. As long as they burn with passion, Jane will not unite with him. Rochester's blinding, the extinguishing of his flaming eyes is demanded absolutely by the symbolic logic of the text, for his blinding signifies the dousing of immorality and passion. Jane's flight on her discovery of Rochester's deception can be seen as a measure of her development, and as an indicator to the significance of the ending. Jane is the moral pillar of Ferndean, but she will not sacrifice herself for his reformation. Bronte refuses to turn Jane into the self-abnegating angel of the Victorian ideal. [p.14] Rochester is not merely the man Jane loves, he is saddled with a great deal of symbolic value too. It is not easy to forget that behind Rochester stands Bertha Mason, who is kept concealed in an attic in Thornfield. Karen Chase discussing the spatial intricacy of Jane Eyre suggests convincingly that houses symbolise the inner regions of the mind.[9] Corridors, attics, passages suggest a greater interiority. It is in secret, private places behind close doors that the most volatile and intense emotions are concealed. Bertha perpetually locked in a remote concealed attic symbolises not just the passion in Jane, but

the passion, degeneracy and immoral sexuality of Rochester. Bertha is dark (as Rochester is), almost as tall as her husband and is masculine. She is both symbol and product of his sexuality, the obverse of the Victorian feminine ideal. She vividly portrays the ultimately hostile and self defeating nature of the unmoderated 'id'. The extent of Rochester's degeneracy, despite his protestations of true love, the narrowness of his immorality are indicated by the fact that this symbol of his passion sets his bed ablaze. It is significant but not unexpected that the prudent Jane awakes before Bertha touches her. She sees Bertha before she is seen, turns to her and is prepared for the confrontation when it comes, not with hysteria but with a mixture of watchful fear and calm. Together, Bertha and Rochester symbolize passions that are uncontrolled or unhampered by any morality, higher feeling or religiosity. Beneath these lie a degeneracy and madness that repel Jane in whom, as Rochester shrewdly judges:

> Reason sits firm and holds the reins.... the passions may rage, but judgement shall have the last word... and the casting vote in every decision"[p.230].

This is more than we can ever say for Rochester. Jane is Rochester's symbolic and moral antithesis. She cannot succumb to the suggested immorality of marriage with Rochester despite her desperate need for it. Besides she is driven from Thornfield by the fear of bigamy as much as by expediency -the realisation that marriage under these conditions would be equivalent to her closing all the paingstakingly open doors to self-discovery and autonomy. The complete annihilation of her moral world that this marriage would imply would be accompanied by an overtly explicit acceptance of devaluation and sexual surrender. The realisation of the absence of any mutuality, equality and dignity touching the relationship, the total objectification of herself, causes her to flee. Her flight is towards discipline, away from the vast potential of passion she has glimpsed in herself. Jane is not an angel fleeing from evil; her flight is prompted as much by pragmatism as it is by morality. Her unerring instinct for survival accounts for her resilient body and her morality which keeps her safe from almost all threats. It soon is apparent that her morality is governed by very this-worldly concerns. It takes her closer to self-fulfilment and God at once, unlike Lucy Snowe's

spirituality which uncompromisingly places God as the end to it. Jane deliberately keeps the relationship with Rochester restrained and confused with minimum physicality. Although nothing in character delineation suggests that Jane will be immoral, her prudery is surprising for Jane is not repelled by, neither does she reject the body and sexuality. Yet she restrains herself:

> I can keep you (Rochester) in reasonable check now,... and I don't doubt to be able to do it hereafter; if one expedient loses its virtue, another must be devised.[p.302]

What appears to be a moral stand, with this reflection, reveals itself to be a carefully and cleverly contrived one. Jane's prudery is necessary for she knows that elusiveness is the best way to win and tame Rochester who has never been resisted by a woman.

After triumphing over the most dangerous of patriarchal forces, Jane goes to Morton where she meets Rivers. Jane is no longer naive and confused about herself. She knows just what she wants and the threat from Rivers, though major, will not overwhelm

her. She recognizes it for what it is. To marry Rivers would be to :

> disown half my nature, stifle half my faculties, wrest my tastes from their original bent, force myself to adoption of pursuits for which I had no vocation.[p.424].

Though she is occasionally carried forward by the stream of Rivers purposefulness, and is confused by his own purposelessness, Jane will not marry Rivers. Morton is more a period of consolidation than one of fresh confrontation. The escape from Rivers who at a certain level , is akin to Brocklehurst and Rochester in his male dominance, is a psychological necessity for her final decision. Rivers functions as a pointer to Jane who discovers that mutuality and reciprocity in a relationship can be found only with Rochester who, inspite of his domineering chauvinism, accepts those aspects of Jane that are most important to herself. He loves her for her plainness, her uniqueness her sexuality - for what she is. She will be free to assert herself only with Rochester. It is no surprise that the guiding voice comes when Rivers has placed his hands on Jane's head, literally pressing her down. Jane must return to

Rochester. But here Brontë meets the insurmountable problem of uniting them, in view of Jane's standing as the rational, moral voice of the book. How can Jane return to Thornfield without violating the moral pattern of the novel, the rationality and morality of the authoritative narrator - protagonist? Angria and Divine intervention come to her aid, and Jane in an incredible scene _hears_ Rochester calling to her from several hundred miles. It is unclear whether this voice is a supernatural one or a manifestation of Jane's own longing. What is evident is that it is not a personal rational decision involving judgement. As Jane's decision does not involve the employment of reason and judgement , but is prompted by a _higher moral voice_ than her own, the responsibility ceases to be hers. Her return to Rochester , ignorant of his purgatorial experiences and moral transformation, is acceptable.for the onus rests on God.

It has often been suggested that Jane's return to Thornfield is really a return to conventionality : both of life where marriage is a safe choice and of fiction where a happy ending is a stock device. The ending is both a capitualtion to romantic orthodoxy and a final vindication of female assertiveness. Jane gives up the prospect of a single life of comfort and

total independence, but gains instead what is more important to her - emotional security, affection and power.

It is interesting to observe how from a position of total dependence, Jane ascends into a position of enviable power. Her return to Ferndean is a movement towards liberation. At Ferndean Jane constructs things to ensure her total domination. We are informed of this much before it happens, when Jane says,"My powers were in play, and in force" [p.445]. Jane rises to complete dominance at Ferndean. She has a physical advantage over Rochester, economic equality, and she redefines Rochester's world (he sees it through her eyes) and his society. Jane imposes a social seclusion that is broken only by the Rivers' sisters who represent an ideal, unthreatening society as they are both intelligent and economically obliged to her. In the world Jane interacts in, everybody is dependent on her. There is no sexual mutuality at Ferndean, but a total reversal of roles, a new kind of sexual hierarchy which is unhappy as it equates femininity with weakness and dependence [Rochester is the female in the relationship] and masculinity with authority

and dominance. Only though his partial, symbolic emasculation does Rochester become androgynous. Jane has the further psychological advantage of initiative as she proposes. The end of the novel then poses no real problem, for Jane does not succumb to conventionality in any way. Rather, Brontë succeeds in portraying female autonomy as possible within the traditional framework of conventionality. Even though Jane retreats into a traditional role of serving, it is one through which she asserts her domination best. Rochester's total dependence on her service reiterate her position of power and authority constantly.

John Reed degenerates and dies a shameful death, Brocklehurst faces economic and social disgrace, Rochester is mained, blinded and slightly broken spirited. Helen Burns dies, Miss Temple vanishes with her husband right out the book. Mrs. Reed, in dying unrepentant ensures a place for herself in the nether regions, Georgina decays into empty frivolity and Eliza into dry unattractive fanaticism. Rivers sails away to India disappearing from the English horizon to appear briefly in a letter and then die quietly. And Jane, strong- despite the impression of frailty - lives wholly undamaged in body of spirit, triumphing in her tenacious

attachment to life and her prudent negotiation between the demands of the spirit and of flesh. To understand the centrality of Jane's growth, it is necessary to see these other characters as symbols. If they are to fulfil their symbolic function they must disappear, for they are "objective correlatives" of facets of Jane's personality, in their extreme manifestation. When the personality alters and integrates, urges change, threats vanish, desires are tempered and buried -- and with them, the people that symbolise them. The catastrophies that befall them, indicate their functional disposability rather than a necessary deliquescence that indicates questionable growth. Jane does grow, consolidating her position herself. Not only does she learn who she is, but what to be and how to stay that way.

SOCIAL REALISM AND FEMALE PROTEST IN *SHIRLEY*

In the early part of 1848, Charlotte Brontë visited Francis Butterfield, a historian staying at Wilsden, to discuss a possible theme for a social novel she was planning. After much thought, she finally chose an earlier period of Yorkshire history - the Luddite riots [1812-1814] - for the setting, and began writing a novel called Hollows Mill. The name of this novel was later changed by her publishers to Shirley, when they released the book in the October of 1849. The discussion with Butterfield, Brontë's detailed study of the files pertaining to the riots, and the original name of the novel attest the fact that Shirley was intended as a social novel with the realistic setting of a specific place and time, and not the romance it has often been read as. In the final chapter of the novel Brontë warns the reader:

> If you think from this prelude, that anything like a romance is preparing for you, reader, you were never more mistaken. Do you anticipate sentiment, poetry and reverie? Do you expect passion stimulus and melodrama? Calm your expectations...something real, cool and solid lies before you; some-

> thing unromantic as monday morning...
> it shall be unleavened bread
> with bitter herbs, and no roast
> lamb.[p.1]

By reading the novel as a failed romance, the critic ignores an explict statement of authorial intent and risks misreading the novel, detecting as literary faults and ambiguities, what are actually the constraints of the genre of the social novel. G.H Lewes in his review of the novel, wrote that it :

> cannot be received as a work of art. it is not a picture but a portfolio of random sketches for one or more pictures. The authoress never seems distinctly to have made up her mind as to what she was to do; whether to describe the habits and manners of Yorkshire and its social aspect in the days of king Lud, or to paint a character, or to tell a love story. All are by turn attempted and abandoned; and the book consequently moves slowly, and by starts - leaving behind it no distinct or satisfactory impression...

> Currer Bell has much yet to learn - and, especially the discipline of her own tumultous energies.[1]

He has since, been echoed frequently by contemporary critics. Laura L. Hinkley, has commented that the novel :

> attempts enormously too much. Shirley concerns history, economics, ecclesiasticism provincial society in its humours, stresses and tragedies... and the writer's own convictions and emotions. All these get horribly in each others way."[2]

Accusations of textual disunity, thematic delitescence, an impatience with the unresolved conventionality of the ending and its bleakness, are all partly due to misreading the socially realistic novel as a romance. Prior to labelling the novel as amaeturish and loosely structured, it is essential to recall that Shirley comes after the brilliantly integrated, densely structured Jane Eyre [1847] ; Brontë was by this time a masterly craftsperson. Elizabeth Gaskell in The Life of Charlotte Brontë reports that:

> Miss Brontë took extreme pains with Shirley. She felt that the fame she had acquired imposed upon her a double responsibility. She tried to make her novel like a piece of actual life... She carefully studied the different reviews and criticisms that had appeared in Jane Eyre, in the hopes of extracting precepts and advice from which to profit.[3]

By this time, Brontë had been purged of her penchant for romance by the personal catastrophe that had befallen her. Branwell whose decline started before Jane Eyre was written, deteriorated rapidly and was dead on the 24th september, 1948. Three months later Emily died after an puzzling illness. Anne lived for five months after Emily's death, dying on the 28th of May 1849. At this time ~~the~~ Charlotte Brontë wrote:

> Moments so dark as these I have never known. I pray for God's support to us all. Hitherto he has granted it.[4]

Brontë's suffering gave her a deep understanding of life, an uncompromising sense of reality and unshakable faith in God, which find utterence in Shirley and more in her final novel Villette [1853].

Cynthia.A.Linder in her book *Romantic Imagery in the Novels of Charlotte Brontë*, argues for a new critical approach to *Shirley*. Linder convincingly states the necessity of reading the novel as a socially realistic novel, and evaluating it accordingly[5]. She emphasises the temporal and situational specificity, the absence of gothicisms, the verisimilitude to incident and of character and place in *Shirley* to support her argument.

Both *Jane Eyre* and *Villete* contain gothic elements that are intrinsic to the novel as they advance plot and explain theme and character. Thornfield with its' sinister, dark corridors, its mysterious inmates, expressionless, untimely laughter, sudden fires and the Pensionnat with its legends, shrouded and ghostly figures are all gothicisms which are primarily symbolic and intrinsic and then effective. *Shirley* eliminates these romantic devices and as intended, is " unromantic as Monday morning". The novel is faithful to life in its rendering of Yorkshire dialect, in presenting details of historical events like the Luddite riots and in the exposition of social reality. Major current political, economic ,social and moral issues all find utterence briefly or exhaustively in the novel. This thematic

plurality gives rise to what has been noticed as textual disunity and the imperceptible secretion of a first person narrative within the omniscient narrative voice used in the novel.

The three central incidents of the novel are the attack on the Mill, Caroline's illness and Malone's expulsion from Fieldhead. They function as the most critical and revelatory points in the social crisis Brontë portrays. The riot with its useless violence and the final defeat of the workers, Caroline's retreat from society and reality, and her decline into neurotic ill health, and Malone's clamorous greed and scorn for the poor that lead to his ignominous expulsion from Fieldhead, make the most powerful and central statements on the three social themes Brontë chooses to elaborate: class relationships, the question of women's education and vocation, including the plight of the single woman, and the reformation of an anti-poor clergy. The three issues are introduced together and very subtly fuse in the narrative, but are discussed separately as well.

The novel opens with a frankly critical

description of the frivolity, insensitivity and snobbery of the three local curates - Malone, Donne and Sweeting. She ends the description with the observation; "theology they may discuss occasionally but piety never"[p.2]. The intention is : "to pluck the mask from the face of the pharisee"[6]. Shortly afterwards the housekeeper Mrs. Gale is introduced and the curates are seen at their pompous, arrogant best: "cut it, woman" said her guest; and the 'woman' cut it accordingly."[P.4] As a woman, as a worker and as a poor person, Gale unites in a single person, three categories of oppressed people. Her impotent hostility and resentment and the curates' insensitive unawareness of it become class attitude and not just individual reactions. The curates, the men, see Mrs.Gale the 'woman', as Robert Moore sees his workers - merely as a means of convenience and not as human beings. Brontë at once establishes an equivalence that is underlined in the subsequent chapters. Women are sympathetically paralleled with the poor : "old maids like the houseless and the unemployed poor" [p.310]. But while Brontë is unreservedly empathetic towards women, she is constrained in her tolerance for the problems of the working class.

Terry Eagleton points out that Brontë's liberalism in the matter of dissolving hierarchies is hampered by her upper class loyalties[7]. This reserve probably coloured her approach to the women's problem too. Her feminist friend Mary Taylor who was often annoyed at her moderate position on women, saw Brontë as "a less radical more troubled personality."[8] Brontë frequently conveys a covert antagonism towards the working class. The description of the attack on the Mill, though the "central dramatic incident of the novel",[9] is distinguished primarily by the absence [of] the major protagonist - the working class. They are present only audibly in their 'howls':

> A yell followed this demonstration - a rioters yell - a North of England ... a Yorkshire rioters yell. You have never had that sound, perhaps, reader? So much the better for your ears - perhaps for your heart; since, if it rends the air in hate to yourself, or to the men or principles you approve, the interest to which you wish well, wrath awakens to the cry of Hate: the lion shakes his mane and

> rises to the howl of the Hyena... [and], bears down in zeal and scorn on the famished and furious mass... it is difficult to be tolerant - difficult to be just - in such moments [pp. 71-72].

The contempt expressed in this lurid description is matched only by the paternalist condescension with which Shirley treates the workers. Robert is positively vicious. In a scene that "dramatises her idea on social philosophy" [10] she compares him to Coriolanus:

> He [Robert] delivered the haughty speech of Caius Marcius to the starving citizens with unction; he did not say he thought his irrational pride right but he seemed to feel it so. Caroline looked up at him with a singular smile..."You sympathise with that proud Patrician who does not sympathise with his famished men, and insults them: there, go on." [p.70-71]

Shirley who is counterpoised, feels in immense responsibility toward the poor:

> this responsibility weighs on my mind ,more heavily than I would have expected. They say there are some families almost starving to death in Briarfield,....I must and will help them. [P.209]

Yet she tells Caroline:

> If once the poor gather and rise in the form of a mob, I shall turn against them as an aristocrat. I shall quite forget pity for their wretchedness and respect for their poverty in scorn of their ignorance, in wrath at their insolence.[P.210].

Ironically, it is for this very scorn that she evicts Malone. The difference is that Shirley will be charitable as long as she can patronize and condescend. Towards the end she defends Robert's brutality towards his workers, something Caroline despite her great affection for Moore, does not do. Shirley is superficially radical and basically orthodox, and her position on the status of women is as ambivalent as her political ideology.

Brontë discusses the problem of unmarried unpropertied women, an issue connected with question of female education and vocation. Her early idealism about marriage and love waned and was replaced by a wary cynicism. In 1839, she wrote to Ellen Nussey about the improbability of her marrying a man for whom she did not have "that intense attachment which would make me willing to die for him."[11] However, by 1840 that view had altered radically:

> Do not be overpersuaded to marry a man you can never respect - I do not say love; because I think if you can respect before marriage moderate love at least will come after; and as to intense passion, I am convinced that it is no desirable feeling.[12]

Brontë uses Caroline to articulate a sophisticated complex discourse on the position of woman. Caroline, pathetic in her victimage and her impotent suffering provides a paradigm for the general condition of Victorian women. Like Caroline, many women retreated from society, declining into ill-health engendered by the desolation, hopelessness and inactivity of their lives.

While Lucy Snowe in Villete is enclosed in a metaphoric prison of the mind, Caroline in Shirley is imprisoned both by external circumstance and her own mind. Caroline is overcome slowly by the injustice of sexual discrimination and retreats into her home and metaphorically into herself. During her psychological crisis, she confines herself to a single room upstairs that symbolises the interior regions of her mind. Karen Chase in Eros and Psyche, discusses the spatial intricacy of Brontë's Jane Eyre and maintains that houses constitute outer shells, rooms passages and corridors, the inner intricate spaces; while drawers , cupboards and closets symbolise still more private areas.[13] One has only to recall Bertha's confinement in the attic, Jane's closetting in the Red room, Lucy's imprisonment in the attic prior to her confrontation with herself and the world to perceive the crucial use of space in Brontë's novels. There is a figural representation of a system of Chinese boxes, at the core of which lies a dangerous emotive energy. The core symbolises a deep hidden privacy of the mind. The spatial pattern that Karen Chase detects in Jane Eyre can be seen in Shirley and Villette too. In Shirley, the outer space is signified by Brairfield, the inner space by the house, while the most private

regions of Caroline's mind are represented by her room. It is here that is the most explosive energies and emotions are exposed. It is because the room at the top of the stair signifies the privacy and intricacy of the mind that Carolines' growing neurosis is accompanied by increasingly long periods of confinement there. Finally when her breakdown is total she confines herself entirely to her room. The reason for Carolines' illness is hinted at very subtly by Brontë who places the statement as a conjecture:

> Probably in her later walk home some sweet poisoned breeze, redolent of honey dew and miasma had passed into her lungs and veins and finding there already a fever of mental excitement, and the langour of long conflict and habitual sadness, had fanned the spark of flame and left a well-lit fire behind [p.330].

Caroline's illness comes immediately after a long discourse on the barren futility of female life, an ugly encounter with Mrs. Yorke a dictatorial matriarch, and a visit to Hollows cottage which convinces her that Robert loves and is loved by Shirley.

In fact it is neither cold nor an over-active imagination that causes her illness, but a dull despair. Brontë communicates the psychical nature of the illness by inconspicuously secreting a first person narrative into the third person narrative[14] throughout Carolines' illness. Further, there is no other way of communicating a mental illness except through the first person. By permitting the reader to have a personal account of Carolines' illness, Brontë enlists the reader in joining her in this indictment of society.

Convention prevents direct open speech with Robert whom Caroline loves and forces on her, as it did on all Victorian women , a brutal exercise in stoicism:

> [a disappointed] lover feminine can say nothing, if she did the result would be shame and anguish, inward remorse for self treachery...Take the matter as you find it; ask no question; utter no remonstrances: it is your best wisdom... you held out your hand for an egg and fate put into it a scorpion. Show no consternation: close your fingers firmly upon the gift: let it sting through

> your palm...Never mind: In time after your hand and arm have swelled and quivered long with torture, the squeezed scorpion will die, and you will have learned the great lesson of how to endure without a sob....you will be stronger, wiser, less sensitive." [p.81-82]

The convention of passivity forces women into indignity and dishonesty: "they scheme, they plot, they dress to ensnare huabands." Women who allow themselves to fail in love without ensnaring the man first, transgress the propriety of loving without

> being asked to love - a natural, sometimes an inevitable chance, but big with misery. [p.83]

Carolines despair is heightened by her economic dependence and social adventitiousness that seem irreperable. Throughout her crisis, Caroline sits sewing or gazing out of the window lost in agonised, solitary contemplation. She becomes the archetypal Lady of Shallot, trapped by the man's image of her, vainly attempting to make sense of it. Through-

-out the course of her trauma, Robert is cheerfully indifferent, immersed as he is in his work, his selfish drive towards material acquisition. Brontë explicitly attributes his psychological and emotional freedom to his self fulfilling vocation. Caroline herself realises this and tells Shirley:

> Women have so few things to think about - men so many; you may have a friendship for a man, while he is almost indifferent to you... I wish I had [a profession] fifty times a day. As it is, I often wonder what I came into this world for. I long to have something absorbing and compulsory to fill my head and hands, and to occupy my thoughts. (PP.178-179) .

When she senses the beginning of her neurosis, in an attempt to save herself, she asks Helstone to let her work. He replies with insensitivity and a contempt for womens' capabilities that was characteristic of the Victorian male:

> Pooh! mere nonsense, I will not hear of governessing, Don't mention it again. It is rather too feminine a fancy.
> [p.152]

Having dismissed her lightly, he inflexibly installs her in her angelic role of domestic servitude: "I have finished my breakfast, ring the bell." [p.152].

Men keep women out of work because of their convenient conviction in her inherent intellectual inferiority. Shirley realising this says : "Men I believe fancy women's minds something like those of children! Now, that is a mistake". [p.278]. The gap between female reality and the male sense of them comes into focus sharply and ironically by juxtaposing the two. Helstone, irritated at Caroline's dissatisfaction and listless decline says:

> She has her meals, her liberty, a good house to live in and good clothes to wear... and there she sits now a poor little pu·ling chit... provoking [p.151].

Helstone dismisses in a non-serious way a very important issue - that of genuine and serious female re-

sentment., and inadvertantly raises an equally important one - <u>the meaning of female liberty</u>. It is precisely the abs ence of liberty, the denial of the right to self-definition and meaningful activity - the 'comforts' offered to a woman that cause Caroline's neurosis. The perceptual myopia of the male expects female contentment because they are contented. Helstone is offended by the ingratitude obliquely conveyed through Carolines illness. Shirley points out the problem accurately when she says :

> if men could see us as we really are, they would be a little amazed; but the cleverest and the accutest of men are often under and illusion about women. They do not read them in a true light: they misapprehend them.
>
> [p.278].

Brontë suggest that the misapprehension is deliberate. Men see woman as they want to because it is expediant. Helstone sees women as toys:

> At heart he could not abide sense in a woman: he liked to see them as silly, as light hearted, as vain, as open to ridicule because they were

> in reality what he held them to be and wished them to be-inferior : toys to play with, to amuse a vacant hour and to be thrown away.[P.91]

Both Robert Moore and the loutish Malone view women identically - as a means to a fortune. Robert proposes to Shirley only because he wants "fortunes splendid prize".[P.421]. Louis Moore, who is greatly arrogant beneath his humility, sees them as wild animals in need of the control of a firm, wise, masculine hand. Joe Scott seems the most outrageous of all because his exploitative chauvinism is undisguised by devious sophistication. With great grimness and purpose, he quotes from the second chapter St. Pauls first Epistle to Timothy.

> 'Let the woman learn in silence with all subjugation. I suffer not a woman to reach nor to usurp authority over a man; but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed then Eve.' [p.260].

and therefore :

> Women is to take their husband's opinion in politics and religion: It is wholesomest for them. [ibid]

Both Shirley and Caroline exclaim at this "stupid observation" ; stupid because it is precisely this subjugation that has reduced female potential to nothingness :

> Stick to the needle - learn shirt making and gown making ,and pie-crustmaking and you'll be a clever woman some day.[p.76].

Joe Scott articulates the view that forms the foundation of patriarchy, which capitalism draws on. In a capitalist society, women exchange their unpaid domestic services for their upkeep. Marriage is then a labour contract through which the husband controls the labour of the wife. Although domestic production is classified as unproductive and worthless, it is essential for the interest of capital. The institution through the woman, provides nurturance to future labour free of cost. The importance of domesticity in a capitalist world provokes men to keep woman dependent on it despite the exploitation of them. This is done through creating impossibly difficult working conditions, and the denial of education which leaves her unsuitable for any vocation.

By the mid-nineteenth century the issue of women working had little to do with feminism; it had become a necessity. The Napoleonic wars along with the steady immigration of young men to the colonies caused a imbalance in the male female ratio, and consequently declining prospects of marriage for many women. Marriage alone provided the woman with economic security and they grew desperate. Men sure of their price, turned women :

> into ridicule; they don't want them: they hold them very cheap; they say - I have heard them say it with sneering laughs many a time - the matrimonial market is overstocked. [p.310]

This image conveys very aptly the importance of market economy and the woman's powerlessness to enhance her financial value. In fact a working woman was viewed as something less than human. Mrs. Pryor gives a vivid, disturbing account of what it meant to be an employed woman:

> "I was early given to understand that ' as I was not their equal', so I could not expect 'to have their sympathy'... The gentlemen I found, regand-

> -ed me as a tabooed woman, to whom, 'they were interdicted from granting the usual priveledges of the sex' and yet who annoyed them by frequently crossing their path. The ladies too made it plain that they thought me 'a bore'. The servants it was signified 'detested me': Why, I could never clearly comprehend... My life...was sedentary, solitary, constrained, joyless, toilsome, ... I sickened." [p.297-98]

By making working conditions impossible for women, men succeeded in keeping the large majority steeped in domesticity and economic , social and psychological dependence. The increased importance given to money enhanced the value of the male even more and women made the irrational identification of phallic potency with social, political and economic power. Patriarchy structured society to ensure female dependence and male independence, and the woman's contentment within her oppression. However the role allotted to the woman was too inauthentic to the imbibed and as resentment errupts, the role is rejected, but with it comes

the awareness of her unsuitability for any other vocation. Caroline asks:

> What was I created for? .... where is my place in the world?
> ....they order [women] to stay at home. What do they expect them to do at home'.? If you ask [as Caroline does]- they would answer, sew and cook [as Helstone does] . They expect them to do this, and this only contendedly, regularly, uncomplainingly all their lives long, as if they have no germs of faculties for anything else.... could men live so themselves? Would they not be very weary? And when there came no relief to their weariness, but only reproaches at its slightest manifestation, would not their weariness in time ferment to frenzy?"
>
> [p.310]

And then, what is unmistakably Brontë's voice, breaks through the monologue with an appeal for vocation for women:

> Men of England! Look at your poor girls, many of them fading,.. dropping off in consumption or decline... degenerating into sour old maids... because life is a desert to them.[p.311]

Yet both Brontë and Caroline see the work they so desire only as a substitute for emotional fulfilment and not a means to autonomy. This view alters radically in Villette.

Throughout Shirley fulfilled, active life is posited as a desirable alternative to Carolines' life. Both Caroline and Shirley encounter patriarchy, but Shirley does so from a position of greater strength and distance. She is much less of a victim than Caroline. Through the discussion of Caroline's situation, the futility of the life of an unmarried, unpropertied female, Brontë makes her statement on the plight of spinsters. In a letter to Ellen Nussey written a few weeks before the completion of Villette, she wrote:

> I have literally nothing to say. I might indeed speak over and over again that

> my life is a pale blank, and often a very weary burden, that the future sometimes appals me ...., the evils that now and then bring a groan from my heart, lie in my position; not that I am a _single_ woman and likely to remain a single woman, but because I am a _lonely_ woman and likely to be _lonely_.[15]

Till Brontë wrote the uncompromising _Villette_, she found the fate of a single woman too painful to be assigned to any of her heroines. _Shirley_ explores the dimension of its lonliness and frustration and _Villette_ "bites the stone" [p.81], fate has offered. Although Brontë herself had a horror of spinsterhood, Caroline's predicament is not by any means a projection of a personal anxiety. Brontë's experience of solitude and deprivation was shared by numerous other Victorian women. Women in _Shirley_ - Miss Mann, Miss Hall, Caroline, Miss Ainely, Hortense, are all precluded from meaningful life by a rigid differentiation of roles which Brontë herself managed to break out of. The lack of male compassion for the victim of his own myopic selfishness is epitomised

in Robert Moore who sniggers as he jestingly repeats "the vinegar discourse of a cankered old maid" [P.141] Young women desperate to marry are a source of equal amusement. A condition created by a society is insiduously transformed into a natural condition. Women are regarded as "monsters" and "fiends" when they employ their sexuality. Ironically by placing a high premium on marriage, men create the very monsters they fear. Female sexuality is satanized because it distracts men from their materialistic goals into pursuit. The degradation of female sexuality along with Biblical doctrines of female destructiveness prompt men to either eliminate her sexuality by turning her into an 'angel' or control it by making her a readily available domestic toy or a whore. This oppressive depersonalisation of the woman is not peculiar to Victorian England as it derives its origins and sanctions from ancient Christian religious scripture. Joe Scott uses both Genesis and Paul to prove the inferiority of women.

As one of the early theologians of the Church, Paul's letters were of universal interest to the Christian Church still in his infancy. As

regards the status of woman, he adhered to the traditional Jewish practice of enforcing the subordinate position of woman which entailed restricting her movements lest she employ her sexuality to ensnare men. He relies heavily on the *Genesis* account of the Fall to support his pronouncements. He asserted that women function in the perverted role of a sex-object on earth. In the Christian account of the woman, she emerges in the three- fold role of temptress, wife and mother, all of which emphasize her instrumental and subordiante status in society. As a temptress she is the instrument of the devil and hence inferior, as a wife she is the instrument of her husband, subordinate to him, and as a mother, she is God's tool and again in a position of inferiority. All these arguments are of particular interest for they do not correspond with Christ's own message that nowhere involves even remotely, a pronouncement on the inferiority of the woman. But Paul and later Augustine and Aquinas, all chose to ignore this, distorting actual religious teaching for the sake of social convenience. It is they that set the tone for thinking about women that would be continually reinforced in the intellectual and practical

tradition of the West for the next two thousand years.

Joe Scott, pronouncing the need for female subordination, supports its necessity by referring to Genesis : "Adam was not decieved, but the woman" [p.260], and again: "Adam was first formed, then Eve... [therefore woman] , be in silence" [ibid]. According to the creation story, man was the result of a special creative effort of God; while woman was created of man, for man, to relieve his lonliness. This assumption gives rise to her derivative status and consequent inferiority and imperfection. Brontë, recognising the potency and danger of this myth, sets Shirley the task of redefining the myth. The importance of myth in the shaping and structuring of a society is stated best by Vico when he describes "how a society in its earliest phase sets up a framework of mythology out of which all its verbal culture grows including its literature". Northrope Frye in Anatomy of Criticism quotes Vico as saying :

> Primitive verbal culture consists of, among other things, a group of stories. Some of these stories take on a canonical importance:

> they are believed to have really happened or else to explain or record that which is centrally important to a society's history, religion or social structure. These canonical stories are called myths." [16]

Frye continues the discourse saying:

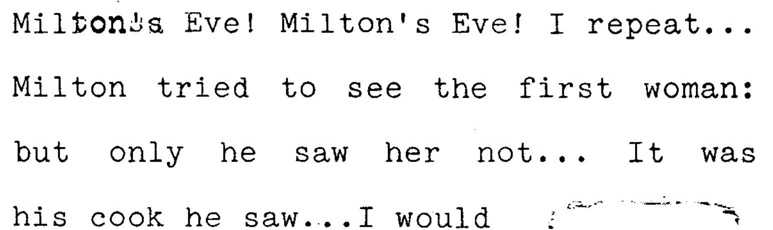
> ...We naturally think of mythology as a human cultural product, but few societies think of their mythologies as something they have created. They think of them rather as a revelation given to them from the Gods... It is particularly law and ritual that are thought of as divinely revealed. [17]

The canonical importance of myth gives it a sanctity that discourages any serious opposition or challenge. The woman then becomes imprisoned in a negative self-image with a crippling rigidity by the continuing importance of myth. Myth seeks the preservation

of constructed societal structures, and the epic with its use of myth, is then a genre that is socially and politically much more serious than any other genre. Shirley re-evaluates Milton's Paradise Lost which contains some of the most popular misogynistic sentiments in literature and proceeds to construct a more just plausible Creation Myth that raises the woman out of inherent inferiority. Milton saw Eve as :

> "All but a Rib Crook'd by nature, bent, as now appears... a serpent false and hateful ...[with] a too Heavenly form pretended to hellish falsehood [to] snare them [men]. But for thee [woman/Eve] I [Adam/man] had persisted happie [X;874-884]

Shirley exclaims in contept:



> Milton's Eve! Milton's Eve! I repeat... Milton tried to see the first woman: but only he saw her not... It was his cook he saw...I would

> to remind him that the first men of the earth were Titans and Eve was their mother.... The first woman was heaven-born [rejecting the myth of derivation],... a woman Titan [with,] mighty hands [who] ... face to face speaks to God... Eve is Jehovah's daughter [not of mans' crook'd rib'] as Adam was 'Jehovah's son'... undying and mighty being! "[p.252 -253].

And then Brontë introduces the reductive false Christian view through Caroline's interruption." She covetted an apple and was cheated by a snake"[ibid]. Immediately after this Shirley is asked to enter the Church and she refuses to, rejecting the institution that propagates a distorted, repressive mythology:"I will stay out with my mother, Eve" [ibid].

However, in spite of this glorious vision of true womanhood and her radical rejection of the oppressive religious institution Shirley is as conventional as Caroline, a victim of social conditioning. Her redefinition of the woman stops short of a

profession of complete equality introducing a terrible ambivalence:

> [Man] is a noble being. I tell you when they are good, they are the lords of creation... moulded in their makers image [lifted] almost above morality... the first of created things. [p.170].

Caroline asks : "above us?" and Shirley replies evasively: "I would scorn to contend for empire with him" implying that man is king. Caroline presses the point a little later asking "But we are mens equals are we not?" and Shirley betrays all her radicalism by answering:

> Nothing ever charms me more than when when I meet my superior - one who makes me sincerely feel that he is my superior... The higher above me so much the better: [P.170-171]

This confused duality was very much a part of the Victorian women's psyche. Frances Cobbes, one of the

greatest radical feminist reformers said that "the great and paramount duties of a mother and a wife make all other feelings and vocations subordinate."[19] Brontë herself had divided loyalties: she resented men, rejecting their claims to superiority and yet longed for submission in an emotional relationship and tried her best to obey Southey's advice to make her home and not literature her business. Shirley's ambiguity is then either a reflection of Brontë's own duality, or a deliberate device to expose how even the most radical of women are finally constrained, repressed and determined by society. The second possibility is more likely because Shirley is finally projected as a victim, suggesting that Brontë deliberately created the duality in her character.

Nancy Cott in her Introduction to Root of Bitterness, while discussing female ambivalence towards the male and towards each other, writes:

> We can view women's group-consciousness as a sub-culture, uniquely divided against itself, by ties to the dominant culture.[19]

This explains why Shirley and Caroline are mutually secretive and mistrustful, and why Robert casts a shadow over their relationship. Shirley betrays a very deep sense of female inadequacy, a fragmentation when she masquerades as Esquire Shirley Keeldar to give herself a feeling of power. For her, her status, wealth and power are all qualified by her sex. She accepts Robert's off-hand treatment of her opinions on her property. Though she has a greater self-esteem and a stronger sense of seperateness than Caroline, she cannot contemplate life without marriage despite her vocation and wealth. Early in the novel she tells Caroline that marriage is ;

> a terrible thought - it suffocates me ! I could never be my own mistress anymore ... If married that could not be.[P.168]

Yet she rejects Sir Philip Nunely, on the astonishing grounds that he is not authoritative enough. She tells her uncle :

> I will accept no hand which cannot hold me in check... besides he would

> never command me... a husband must be able to control me...Did I not say I prefer a master? One in whose presence I shall feel obliged to be good ... A man whose approbation can reward - whose displeasure punish me? A man I shall feel it impossible not to love and very possible to fear [p.433-34] .

Mr. Sympsom in despair exclaims:

> Are you not enough to bewilder ones brain with your self contradiction? [ibid]

What Shirley wants despite her talk of independence and equality is what Patritia Beer calls:

> a good working relationship between a man and a dog or a man and a horse[20]

This is borne out by a series of explicit images that follow that liken Shirley to a wild animal. The relationship between her and Louis instead

of being one of equality and mutuality, is one of domination and subordination, master and servant, possessor and object:

> I have tamed the lioness, I am her keeper [...] ...Now, then, I have you; you are mine [p.482]

And Shirley speaks with the trembling apprehension of a slave : "Will you be good to me and never tyrannise?"[ibid] Louis promptly claims his right to tyranny by staking his ownership : "Tame or fierce, wild or subdued, you are mine" [ibid] Shirley reveals in her new -found servitude:

> I am glad I know my keeper and I am used to him. Only his voice will I follow; Only his hand shall manage me; only at his feet will I repose. [ibid]

Shirley is unrecognizable now. The confident wilful Miss Keeldar who thumbed her nose at conventionality is portrayed as reduced to a domestic animal.

Does Shirley actually say these things? Is her ingratiating servility true? Why does Brontë feel compelled to abandon the third person and the first person voice often used, for the more cryptic second person narrative voice while discussing Shirley? Only in the last chapter does the omniscient narrator reflect on Shirley. Shirley is absolutely silent after the thirty second chapter in the thirty seven chapter novel. Yet she occupies considerable narrative space. However we hear about her only through either Caroline or Louis both of whom describe her feelings. But significantly Louis alone speaks for her - he gives voice to her silent thoughts. We learn that Shirley behaves irrationally, neurotically - she sleeps little, eats less and postpones her wedding day till compelled by Louis to finalise it. Louis recognising her unhappiness tries to cheer her up by declaring that he too is, "far from happy in his present, unsettled state". [p 506]. And Shirley for the first time in his report answers with something of her old spirit and a good amount of bitterness: and her reply provides a clue to understanding her silence and the change on the narrative mode:

> Oh, yes; you are happy!... you dont know how happy you are ! - any change will be for the worse! [P.499]

The second part of her reply seems to be despairingly addressed to herself. Unlike Jane Eyre who decides to run away from Rochster and refuses Rivers mainly to keep her own self inviolate, Shirley will have to :

> disown half [her] faculties, wrest [her] tastes from their original bent, force [herself] to the adoption of pursuits for which [she] had no vocation,

because there is no equality in the relationship with Louis.

Her silence signifies the triumph of convention over the outlined radical change, the loss of liberty. Shirley's unrestrained expression was the essence of her freedom and autonomy. By her silence and capitulation Charlotte Brontë conveys both the loss of freedom and begins answering the question on the existence of female liberty that Helstone inadvertantly raises when he says:

"she has her liberty" ... Does the woman have any freedom at all in the given social conditions? Hobbes in the Leviathan says that:

> "freedom signifies an absence of external impediments which ... may take away a [wo] mans power to do what [she] would; but cannot hinder [her] from using the power left [her], according as [her] judgement and reason shall dictate to [her][21]

This definition does not differentiate with enough subtlety between external or social and internal or personal freedom. External freedom roughly speaking, is the freedom from outside restraints of all sorts. Society makes this freedom impossible for human kind but confines women much more. Personal or internal freedom includes external freedom and is interpreted by Robert C.Neville in The Cosmology of Freedom in terms of four basic dimension of freedom: "external liberty, freedom of intentional action, freedom of choice and of creativity."[22] Shirley's reluctant acceptance of Louis and Caroline's relieved acceptance of Robert, though ultimately free choices in so far as consent is there, do not signify the

existence of freedom; but rather establish its absence. Throughout the novel Brontë reiterates this total absence of freedom by emphasising the external constraints that prevent the woman from intentional action, and the absence of choice for the woman. There is no viable alternative to marriage, there is therefore, no free decision possible on the subject.

Caroline's bondage is far more sinister as she does not even notice her unfreedom - her socialisation is complete. But Shirley's final imprisonment is far more tragic for she, unlike Caroline who has been socialised to recognise bondage as freedom, is fully aware of what she has lost. Neither woman has any power over themselves or their lives. When Brontë insists on education for women, she echos Mary Wollstonecraft's who in reply to Rousseau's "Educate women like men... and the more they resemble our sex, the less power they will have over us"..., answers:

> This is precisely the very point I aim at. I do not wish them to have power over men, but over themselves.[23]

The ending of the novel is deliberately unsatisfactory, contrived, abrupt and unresolved. It forces the rebellion and challenge of the novel into conformity and submission . Caroline gives up all plans of independence and employment and Shirley:

> abdicated without a word or struggle. "Go to Mr. Moore; ask Mr. Moore" was her answer when applied to for order. [p.492]

Status quo is preserved. Both women and worker remain exloited, impotent victims. Industrialisation continues and the final vision is Robert's who is himself controlled by external forces. Helene Moglen and Patricia Beer read the ending as an indication of Brontë's duality, and Terry Eagleton sees it as an expression of Brontë's conventional paternalism However, it is the only possible ending open to a writer who has stated her intent to delineate society realistically. A reversal of economic and sexual power structure would be inconsistent with social reality and defeat the purpose of the novel. The aggressive selfish megalomanical Moores of the world do not crumple up like the Rochesters of romances. And Brontë realised that given the socialised ambivalence of female nature, women would not

easily enter those occupational and political bastions traditionally arrogated by men to themselves. Shirley and Caroline are typical victims of this confused Victorian ambivalence.

The ending of the novel therefore does not pose a problem. It is consistent with the theme and unifies it, it is concordant with characterisation and authorial intent, and adheres to the logic of the text. What Brontë saw in her society was bleakness and the power of oppression and that is what she uncompromisingly showed her reader in Shirley. Shirley situates the women and defines her socially and Villette visualises a spiritual way out of the personal and social unfreedom that denies and circumvents female autonomy at every level.

THE SPIRITUAL QUEST OF LUCY SNOWE

Charlotte Brontë's attempt in Jane Eyre to forge mutuality in sexual relationship failed for it ended in a reversal of conventional roles. Jane ascended into power while Rochester declined into dependence. Shirley tries to right this with a moderate degree of symbolic emasculation of the heroes that is acceptable within the constraints of realism. Louis is subservient in his economic dependence and Robert Moore is made temporarily dependent and impotent by his accident. But this proved to be an ineffective solution as the forced experience of the feminine predicament, rather than creating a sympathetic understanding of it in the men, made them appreciate and assert their power even more. Caroline and Shirley are finally disregarded and oppressed. Through this stark ending Brontë seems to suggest that in the given social conditions the ideal of androgyny is impossible to achieve. It is possible perhaps only in a romance where there is freedom from realism. Villette (1853) Brontë's final, most complex novel offers no wish-fulfiling solutions to either the heroine or the reader. Neither supernatural nor human agencies offered the protagonist Lucy Snowe an anodyne for suffering. Her lover Paul Emmanual is drowned while on his way back to marry her and Lucy is left

alone in bleak spinsterhood deprived of a much-wished-for emotional fulfilment. However, suffering in Villette, is not meaningless but divinely ordained and hence ultimately beneficial to Lucy. Paul's death is then, both tragic and propitious, and constitutes Brontë's final comment on the possibility of sexual mutuality. Why is Lucy's impending marriage circumvented despite Paul's inherent androgyny? What in the text and subtext demand this ending that is logical and perfectly consistant with the rest of the text? This chapter attempts to analyse the novel and vindicate the ending through it .

Both Jane Eyre and Shirley are primarily concerned with the demolition of sexual assymmetry through the creation of androgynous heroines. However, the heroes - Rochester, Robert, and Louis Moore - remain despite their symbolic emasculations, essentially Byronic. Only in Villette does Charlotte Brontë reconstruct both the male and the female within the androgynous vision. Androgyny, a word coined by Coleridge and made current by Virginia Woolf, was originally used to describe the freedom of an artist constitutionally ignoring, during the process of perception and expression, the boundaries between mental acts

conventionally ascribed to either male or female. However, from this description of a creative mind deconstructing duality, it has come to be associated with a personality or a stage in the individual's life which is not narrowly masculine or feminine; it is used as a description of character. The articulation of the new vision of androgyny begins with a revision of the donné from which Brontë begins in the Angrian tales. In Jane Eyre, the earlier assumptions of Angria - the omnipotent male and the primacy of love in a woman's life - though submerged, linger. Jane is essentially androgynous but, Rochester has feminity forced on him at the end by a retributive, partial incapicitation. It is not a particularly heartening resolution as femininity comes as a punishment and is synonymised with weakness and dependence thus covertly conveying misogyny. Jane's cautious seclusion from miscellaneous society suggests that Rochester's 'androgyny' is precarious. He might turn destructively masculine in a conducive social environment. Jane is left responsible for ensuring continuing mutuality and domestic morality. By exempting Rochester from these responsibilities, Brontë inadvertantly entrenches the woman as the moral and domestic guardian -

the Victorian ideal. In Villette, Brontë constructs an inherently androgynous male who shares moral responsibility equally with the female and thereby articulates a critique of the prevalent indulgence to male moral irresponsibility.

Men fully supported the Christian teaching which declared that without the sustaining moral guidance of the male, women, paradoxically both inherently evil and appointed moral guardians, would fall easy prey to evil. Joe Scott in Shirley, represents the misogynistic Christian and masculine point of view clearly when he says :

> "Adam was not deceived; but the woman, being deceived, was in transgression... let the woman learn in silence with all subjugation. I suffer not the woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man". [p. 310]

Brontë rejects both the double moral standard and this construct of female culpability and weakness. She gives her heroes practical moral responsibility and her heroines intelligence, a sense of autonomy, economic self-sufficiency and independent moral credibility.

She believed that women were morally untrustworthy because of social deprivation alone : "Men of England... keep your girls ' minds narrowed and fettered - they will... be a plague and a care"[p.311]. This conviction in the presence of the inner moral voice in every woman led her to insist that they cultivate it and submit to it, and not to male authority. Jane is staunchly obedient to her inner voice and not to Rochester's dictates. However, she does falter in her morality briefly by allowing Rochester to eclipse God. Lucy Snowe is constantly aware of and guards against the dangers of false idolatory. But it is only towards the end of her quest that her detatchment is prompted by morality . Initially, her reticence towards emotional entanglements is chiefly because of her desire to avoid pain at all costs. This change in principle must be recognised as a growth that Paul Emmanuel is functional in bringing about .

Villette is an autobiography that records Lucy Snowe's growth during her spiritual and psychic quest. Brontë called her works autobiographies because she wanted to be taken seriously. Autobiographies , edifying in nature , along with histories, classics and essays constituted serious reading. There was a tradi-

tion of treating the protagonist of an autobiography as a pilgrim. In her preface to The Professor she states the intention of her novels clearly : "to delineate the earthly pilgrimage of man", and goes on to insist that her hero and heroines :

> should ... master at least half the ascent of the 'Hill of Difficulty'... As Adams' sons [and daughters, they] should share Adams' doom and drain all throughout life, a mixed and moderate cup of enjoyment .[1]

About Lucy Snowe she writes in a letter: "I am not leniently disposed towards Miss Frost ... I never meant to appoint her lines in pleasant places." [2]

Her female protagonist like Bunyan's journey through the "dreary wilderness" [P.241] of this world. They are pilgrims in their loneliness and in the nature of their quest. They all ask ceaseless inward questions, concerned as they are , with the nature of God, the reason of their being and suffering. Jane Eyre questions the dying Helen "where is God? What is God?" [p.113]. In Shirley, Caroline in despair cries out :

"What was I created for? Where is my place in the world?"[p176]. And Lucy Snowe upto the very end of the novel, attempts to understand the "inscrutable" God of Miss Marchmont. All the quests and particularly Lucy's , are directed towards the discovery of the in-nerself, its identity, meaning and purpose within a spiritual framework and in relation to society. In this Brontë is as explicit as Carlyle in her concern with the religious and social issues of the time.

Like her contemporaries George Eliot and Dickens, Bronte was deeply influenced by Carlyle. Barry Qualls has pointed out the thematic similarity between Villette and Sartor Resartus, though he asserts that Lucy's is not a spiritual quest.[3] On the contrary, Lucy's is primarily a spiritual quest. Sartor Resartus, examined the duality of human kind using, as most Victorian novels did, the divice- of the double plot for this exploration. The work was an attempt to edify, reprove and guide the dehumanised, mechanised people of Victorian England. Unlike the single pilgrim of Bunyan in the allegorical Sartor Resartus, every human being is the quester, a Diogens Teufelsdröckh. Diogenes is orphaned , initially enslaved by his demon self, denying the inward world in his 'Ever lasting No'. He sets out on a quest to discover himself and to seek answers

to inward queries. Carlyle saw all his countrymen enslaved by their demon selves, denying the inner self-as little better than animals, eating and grunting in satisfaction in their "Doubting Castles", happy in "a world without lungs fast wheezing itself to death in horrid convulsions and deserving to die.[4]" Bronte was equally disturbed by the "signs of the times" but unlike Carlyle, did not call fiery judgement down on the godless world that dissatisfied and victimised her. But, her anxiety and despair do not go unexpressed. In Shirley, she calls Victorian England the modern "Babel" in danger of being struck down for its impudence and spiritual disintegration. Like Carlyle, she envisaged the Victorian as a destitute pilgrim. All her protagonists are orphaned, cut off, from all meaningful kinship ties - a sign of their metaphysical lonliness. This lonliness is a very necessary condition for the freedom for self-discovery. Jane Eyre must break all relational ties before she can begin discovering herself. After doing this she says:

> my 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 been burst, and

> that I struggled into an unhoped for liberty.[P.69]

Liberty and alienation are closely linked, for with estrangement comes a freedom from inherited duties into relative mobility, from societal directives into self definition. Orphaned and thus free from external constraints, the quester both demon and God-born , seeks to reconcile the dualities of his/her private and public self accomplished through a spiritual journey. Brontë echoes Kierkegaard's assertion that a development that ignores God is no development at all. He wrote:

> Only that man's life is wasted who lived on; so deceived by the joys of life or its sorrows that he never became eternally and decisively conscious of himself as spirit, or self, or [what is the same thing], never became aware and in the deepest sense, received an impression that he, he himself, his self, exists before this God, which gain of infinity is never attained except through despair.[5]

The wasted lives of Marchmont, Rochester and the legendary nun are testimony to this conviction. Brontë

conveys the spiritual concern of the novel both overtly and covertly through the language of the text and devices like symbol and allusion. Michael Wheeler in the Art of Allusion in Victorian Fiction discusses the importance of detecting and accurately understanding allusions in a novel for they are specifically functional[6]. Allusions are borrowings from or references to an adopted or parent text, and function as crucial thematic and plot pointers. They also at times indicate structural parallels between the "adopted" text and the "adoptive text. In Villette the allusions to Sartor Resartus, Pilgrims Progress, the Old [and] New Testaments are thematic pointers. As they are all texts concerned primarily with spirituality, they indicate the spiritual concern of the author and the spiritual nature of the protagonist's quest. This concern and theme are underlined further by the religious symbolism and the Biblical language of the text. The occurance of Divine retribution, and the protagonist's Christian attitude toward suffering - deserved and unmeritted - also indicate the religious aspect of the novel. Brontë suggests that life is governed completely by the Divine. She does this by using the two archetypal symbols of the 'sea,' that represents destiny

or a controlling force and the 'ship' symbolising the human soul. This frequent use of metaphor serves to conceal the real Lucy from the reader and to underline the hand of God in her life:

> "picture me, for the next eight years, as a bark slumbering through halcyon weather, in a harbour still as glass - the steersman stretched on the little deck, his face up to heaven , his eyes closed: buried, if you will, in a long prayer. Picture me then, idle, basking, plump and happy stretched on a cushioned deck, warmed by constant sunshine, rocked by breezes, indolently soft. However, it cannot be concealed that ... I must somehow have fallen overboard.... the rush and saltiness of briny waves in my throat, their icy pressure in my lungs .... in fine, the ship was lost, the crew perished. [p 28]

The omnipresent Divine's pattern varies from life to life. Graham and Paulina are blessed and protected by "Gods will" in scarce danger of encountering "weather fitful and gusty, wild and variable." Mrs. Bretton is like a "stately ship cruising safe on smooth seas"

Despite the incomprehensibility of the Divine will, it is ultimately justified. However, Lucy's believing acceptance comes only towards the end of the novel:

> amidst His boundless works, is somewhere here stored the secret of this last fate's justice; I know that His treasures contain the proofs as the promise of its mercy. [p.461]

Those who ignore God - Marchmont and the legendary nun of Villette, and Rochester of Jane Eyre-are punished in different ways. It is heaven's justice. David Lodge recognizing the religious aspect of the novels, makes an observation on Jane Eyre that is, in essence, more applicable to Villette:

> Jane Eyre is remarkable for the way it asserts a moral code as rigorous and demanding as anything in the Old Testament, in a universe that is not theocentric, but centred on individual consciousness... The sanctions of Old Testament morality-punishment by fire and water, destitution, exile and solitariness - are still, much in evidence both on the literal and on the metaphorical levels; but the symbolic art of the novel, presents them as extension of the individual conciousness."[7]

Both Miss Marchmont and the nun exile themselves from God and society by their human attachments. Marchmont is punished with unfulfilled solitude - a metaphoric burial, while the nun with a literal burial. The nun forgets God in her worship of the false idol of human love and Marchmont tells Lucy ;

> You see, I still think of Frank more than of God; and unless it be counted that in thus loving a creature, so much, so long and so exclusively, I have not blasphemed the creator, small is my chance of salvation.[p.34]

Then, there follows a deceptively innocent question: "What do you think, Lucy, of these things? "(ibid). Lucy does not answer Marchmont immediately, but her life becomes not just a reply, but a critique of Marchmont's life. Lucy's quest begins almost immediately after this dialogue, prompted by Marchmont's death that leaves Lucy: "anomalous, desolate, almost blank of hope"[p.39]. Instead of her characteristic withdrawal from life in the face of pain, Lucy this time acquires God's plan, answers the call and so finds fortitude and fulfilment. She hears a voice urging her in Biblical language to "leave this wilderness, and go out hence"[p.36]

By obeying it, she enters on a spiritual journey emerging from the 'Everlasting No'. Lucy, unlike Jane who decides, is sent forth on a pilgrimage - God's chosen one. It is no accident that Ginevra Fanshawe calls Lucy Diogenes, for Lucy is on a spiritual quest of self discovery. Like Diogenes Teufelsdröckh, she becomes a "spectre -fighting [wo] man, nay one who will one day be a spectre - queller."[8]

The journey into herself, is like Christian's in Pilgrims Progress, arduous and painful and Lucy often cries out in the voice of Job against her unmerited suffering engendered by a quest she is reluctant to begin:

> It seemed I must be stimulated into action, I must be goaded, driven, stung, forced to energy. ....I had wanted to compromise with Fate; to escape occasional great agonies by submitting to a whole life of privation and small pains. Fate would not be so pacified..
>
> [p.31]

However, later, Lucy herself is eager for the quest:

> My inner self moved, my spirit shook its always fettered wings

> half-loose; I had a sudden feeling as if I who had never yet truely lived, were at last about to taste life.[p.39]

Having embarked on the quest, Lucy is constantly impelled into action. She is placed in the middle of a human community and is frequently depended on. She is made to teach, nurture, act and finally to guide lovers. Every time Lucy decides to withdraw she is pulled back into life by people or circumstance. But as her quest progresses, Lucy grows more eager and finally even tranquillisers cannot restrain her need for discovery.

It is apt that Emmanuel [which means "God with us"][9], Isiah's prophesied messiah, who helps others to free themselves through thought and action, should assist Lucy out of the wilderness of psychic and spiritual despair born of an inability to believe in either herself or in the love of God. Lucy Snowe's quest, involves (1) breaking out of her solitary, self enclosed world to be socially useful, part of a community, where she has to make her contribution through independent effort; (2) reconciling the dualities that force her into repression and isolation for :

> if thou canst not apprehend the things within thee, thou canst not comprehend the things above thee: the best looking glass wherein to see thy God, is perfectly to see thyself" [10]

Paul pushes Lucy immediately into employment and human community at the Pensionnat. The Victorians believed that the path to God was through the ethic of work. Carlyle expressed this and Brontë underlines his emphasis asserting that "woman has a Bildung of her own" and explores the "spiritual, self-defining, nature of work when that work does not mean the same thing for women as it does for men.[11]" Villete redefines the womans work completely. While Shirley portrays how women fulfil others through their work, remaining thwarted and unfulfilled themselves,. Villette portrays an alternative self-satisfying, spiritualising work for the women.

The Romantics found God through Nature, something the Victorians were unable to do. Lyell, Darwin and Industrialisation had succeeded in alienating Nature. Jane is threatened equally by exposure to nature as by confinement. In Villette, the key image used to protray the advent of death is the wind. Lucy

hears the Banshee shriek when Paul's ship founders: "Peace, peace, Banshee - 'keening' at every window"[p.505] when Marchmont dies : "O, hush! hush! I said ... making a vain effort to stop my ears against that subtle and searching cry"[P.36] ;and prior to every tragedy:

> I had heard that very voice ere this, and compulsory observation had forced on me a theory as to what it boded. Three times in the course of my life, events had taught me that these accents in the storm - this restless, hopeless cry - denote a coming state of the atmosphere unpropitious to life. [p.36]

Life is a tossed ship on "stormy seas", the seas that finally consume Paul. There is no longer the image of the Wordsworthian child in close communion with nature. Romantics saw the child in its harmony with nature and absence of self-consciousness, as being closest to God. The adult could break out of the prison of self-consciousness and return to God through nature. The alienation from nature filled the Victorians with the consciousness of having lost the freedom of movement in the open Cosmos . They were the inheritors of the precarious amalgam of the Puritan hostility towards nature and the Romantic's adulation of it. This ambivalence, and the rejection of the solipsism of

the Romantic quest eventually resulted in the ethic of salvation through work.

But work alone cannot bring Lucy close to God. She must "apprehend the things within" to "comprehend the things above". And so Lucy's inward journey which is provoked by an isolation full of suffering. Lucy's growth involves understanding this necessary pain. The spiritual and psychic Bildung of the novel occurs through the resolution of the hidden dualities of Lucy's personality. Lucy appears initially to be authoritative about herself. She informs the reader about herself and of how she is perceived by others. No omniscient narrative voice comments on Lucy's personality. Jane Eyre ~~doesn't have an omniscient narrator either, but while,~~ Jane is authoritative and reliable, open and truthful, Lucy is deceptive, reticent, and mistrustful. It is largely due to Lucy's character that the narrative plan of Villette is only superficially similar to that of Jane Eyre. In both the novels, the central controlling consciousness is that of the female narrator protagonist. But while Jane invites the reader to share her perceptions , Lucy does not want and does not gain the readers confidence till the end. She has little faith in the readers enthusiasm for reality and hard truths.

Frequently, Romantic idylls are constructed only to be demolished suddenly with a single terse statement: "Cancel the whole of that if you please, reader"[p.48]. In Angria disasters are constantly undone, making reality tractable; but in Villette, romance and the romantic reader are constantly checked underlining the inescapable strictness of reality. The obliging genii of Angria who hastily substitute distasteful reality with romance are exchanged for a stern inner voice and the inflexible, moral code of God. However unjust the order of things may seem, the reality of it must be faced, and the romantic reader who is given a palatable alternative ending, is warned: "Day dreams are the delusions of the demon". [p.49].

Lucy's distrust alerts the reader to possible deception and non-disclosure. Even her definitive statements about herself . "I, Lucy Snowe was calm"[p.16], "I know not that, I was of a self-reliant or active nature"[p.29] are received with hesitation. It soon becomes apparent that to know Lucy Snowe it is necessary to catch her off guard. Towards the end of the novel, Lucy gradually speaks with more candour and this is an indication of her maturity. As long as Lucy is spiritually and psychically immature she is evasive and unreliable. Characters in the novel are equally deceived. Lucy informs us of this with glee:

> "What contradictory attributes of character we sometimes find ascribed to us, according to the eye with which we are viewed. Madame Beck esteemed me learned and blue; Miss Fanshawe caustic, ironic and cynical; Mr. Home, a model teacher , the essence of the sedate and discreet; somewhat conventional perhaps too strict, limited and scrupulous, but still the pink and pattern of governess correctness; whilst another person Paul Emmanuel to wit, never lost an opportunity of intimating in opinion that mine was a rather fiery rash nature - adventurous , indocile and audacious. I smiled at them all. If anyone knew me it was little Paulina Mary [pp.274-275] .

We cannot share Lucy's laughter for alongwith Ginevra, we pose a question which is a statement of theme: "who are you Lucy Snowe?" [p.280]. The symbolism, structure and narrative mode of the novel are governed by this theme.

Villette shares the superficial structure of the other novels which have clearly fixed symbols as indi-

cators of progress or at least stages of development: all Brontë's heroines begin at the depths of deprivation. Orphaned and deeply ravaged in childhood, they impel themselves or are pushed into redemptive action. The early absence of affection is compensated by a surrogate mother who inculcates morality and brings a degree of emotional stability. Her loss engenders further mobility and progress which inevitably involves a sexual encounter at the resolution of which the protagonists development is complete. The structure of both _Jane Eyre_ and _Shirley_ poses no serious problem. But _Villette_ has been accused of lacking structural unity as the focus of the novel shifts abruptly and with no apparent reason to Lucy from Polly. Further, there are serious tonal distortions caused by Lucy's dispassionate account of a loving, warm household. These apparent serious aesthetic flaws are in fact, brilliant devices to explore character through narrative mode and structure.[13] They answer the thematic question "who are you Lucy Snowe?"

Lucy is a fiercely private, deliberately inaccessible person. The problem for both Brontë and Lucy is to convey this reticence and yet tell her story. This paradox is resolved by directing the narrative

away from Lucy towards Paulina, who it will be discovered resembles Lucy minutely. Lucy significantly informs us : "If anyone knew me, it was little Pauline Mary" Through this very avoidance of disclosure and the re-directing of the narrative, Lucy reveals herself. Her coldness towards the spontaneous warmth she witnesses in the Breton household is because she has experienced the dangers of emotional dependence. Hence, she never attempts to direct affection towards herself, and is alarmed at Polly's unconcealed monomania for affection. The spontaneous identification with and understanding of Polly tell the story of Lucy's past which she keeps permanently closed to the reader. Brontë subtly but explicitly indicates how deeply Lucy identifies with Polly. Lucy is not calm when Polly leaves herself vulnerable to Graham:

> [Polly] ran the risk of incurring such a careless impatient repulse as would be worse ... than a blow[p. 23]

Her perception is accurate. When repelled by Graham, Polly "grew like a bit of marble... never after this rebuff did she ... in any way solicit his attention". [pp 20-21]. Polly responds to pain as Lucy does-with withdrawal. Lucy considers" these struggles with the natural character [that] ... may seem futile and fruitless," wise. But this stifling 'trance'- like existence [p 18]

causes a pain Lucy likens to "catalepsy"[p.96]. Passivity and repression instead of bringing peace and fulfilment bring the reverse. Only the spiritual growth that comes with honest, consistant, self-exploration can free Lucy from the bondage of her 'demon' self. This growth begins in Villette under M.Paul and may be estimable by the way Lucy tackles the apparition of the 'nun'.

The 'nun' haunts Lucy till two chapters before the end of the novel and is a parody of all that Lucy is. Count de Hamal cruelly observes that Lucy is 'as sour as a nun" and Lucy herself ruefully acknowledges her resemblance to "some ghost". The 'nun' symbolises Lucy's repressed sexuality, her silence, her metaphoric confinement and the social ostracization she forces on herself. The 'nun' appears four times to Lucy and each of the visitations is strategic and extracts a special response from Lucy. The first time the nun appears is when Lucy closets herself in the attic to read Graham's letter. Her retirement into enclosure is prophetic of Lucy's voluntary exile in the event of an entanglement with Graham, and the threat this consequent confinement and solitude poses to her relationship with God. Lucy, like the legendary 'nun' who appears to

her will lose sight of God in her adulation of a human, and will be metaphorically buried. When these threats congeal into the aspect of the nun and appear before Lucy, she rushes from the attic in horror. The second time Lucy sees the 'nun' is while burying Graham's letters and her hope of emotional fulfilment with them. This time the 'nun' represents the chill of Lucy's enforced sterility and hints at the isolated sterile self of the future. Lucy describes the meeting:

> I stood about three yards from a tall, sable -robed, snowy veiled. woman. Five minutes passed, I neither fled nor shrieked, she was there still. I spoke: "who are you? and why do you come to me?"
> She stood mute. She had no face - no features... but she had eyes, and they viewed me.
> I felt if not brave, yet a little desperate... I advanced one step. I stretched out my hand, for I meant to touch her. She seemed to recede. [pp. 270-71]

It is significant that Lucy does not run away this time. She is prepared to challenge the spectre of

her repression. The moment she decides to confront and 'handle' the vision, it recedes. Lucy's conquest over her repression has begun her development from a passive, fearful observer to an active agent suggests. The third time Lucy sees it she is with M.Paul who shares her enforced chastity. The 'nun' appears immediately after M.Paul has stated his affection for Lucy in unequivocal language. This time Lucy does not speak; she gazes closely at the nun and later says: "I never had seen her so clearly". In this encounter the nun is symbolical of Lucy's inhibition and the impediments to the friendship with Paul. These impediments that are hinted at are Madame Beck (whom Lucy once mistakes for the 'nun'), their religious differences and Justine Marie, Paul's old love . Lucy, comprehending the nature and curse of Paul's "morbid fancies" (he too has visitations) says:

> Was I then to be frightened by Justine Marie? Was the picture of a pale dead nun to rise, an eternal barrier? And what of the charities which absorbed his worldly good? What of his heart sworn to virginity? [p.362]

Lucy now clearly understands the obstacles to their friendship that come from her and from others. These

are destroyed before she has her final vision of the 'nun'. Significantly, the last time Lucy sees the 'nun', it is insubstantial, mere robes on her bed. Never before has the threat of losing Paul Emmanuel appeared so real and so dreadful and so the nun invades her most private space- her bed. However, the obstacles have already been destroyed although Lucy does not know it, and all that is left of the 'nun' are her clothes which Lucy ritualistically destroys. On entering the dormitory, she finds the nun:

> My head reeled; ... Be the spectacle what it might, I could afford neither consternation, scream nor swoon. Besides I was not overcome.... I defied spectra. In a moment I had rushed on the haunted couch: nothing leaped out ... all the movement was mine, so was all the life, the reality, the substance the force.... I tore her up - the incubus! I held her on high - the goblin! I shook her loose - the mystery! And down she fell... down in shreds and fragments - and I trod upon her. [p.428-29]

Lucy has finally overcome her spectral oppressive self, she has resolved the dualities, she is free. And this liberation has come through M.Paul who constantly provokes

her to self discovery. The irony of the reality and the duality of the nun, is brilliant. The 'nun' is actually Count de Hamal, a dandy and a marauder who masquerades as a nun to keep his sexual liasons secret. The 'nun' symbol exemplifies Bronte's mastery over the narrative technique - there are no inconsistencies or irrelevancies in the symbol used, both in its literal and metaphoric sense.

M. Paul forces the confrontation with the 'nun' and all 'she' symbolises. Early in the novel, Lucy is shut up in the attic by him. The literal purpose of her imprisonment is to ensure that she learns her part in a play he is directing. Lucy reluctantly complies and prepares in solitude for this representative participation in life. In Nineteenth century women's fiction, the room has complex connotations. It can symbolises (1) an oppressive cloister, (2) a pause in the narrative when the characters may observe and reflect on themselves or on others from a vantage point,[14] [3] a womb from which the character emerges to experience a rebirth of personality. Lucy's confinement constitutes both a pause for analysis and consoldiation,and a womb from which Lucy emerges to face the ordeal of confronting herself and the world. The process of self discovery begins at once

with Lucy's startled discovery of her fondness and talent for acting. But both acting and the subject of the play reflect a particular kind of society that Lucy finds tiresome, frivolous and inappropriate for herself. She declares her desire to "act to please [her]self" and emphasises this withdrawal by refusing to participate in the festivities that follow .

Lucy decides what she wants to be, very carefully and consciously. Before the play despite severe pressure, she refuses to dress up as a man. Her final costume is androgynous and constitutes the first overt statement on Lucy's personality. She insists on dressing herself:

> I don't object to some of them, but I wont have...all...Nobody must meddle: the things must not be forced on me . Just let me dress myself."[p.124]

All along, M. Paul who provokes this delineation, stands by "listening, watching and prompting in the side screens" [p.125], but never leading. In M. Paul, Brontë has come a long way from Rochester and Robert Moore. Soon after the play the school closes for the vacations and Lucy is deprived of the prop of work that kept her going. The situation makes her realise both the

dangers and the importance of work. Useful work is that which benefits society and assists self-discovery. When it is used as a means of avoiding self-definition, it becomes a hazard. For the first time Lucy realises that solitude is a punishment, for solitude is synomymous with stasis.

Growth requires a susceptibility to influences that come only through human association. When Lucy laments against the God who broke her stasis, Paul answers her as Eli'hu and God answer Job . Eli'hu advises Job to consider the power of the Almighty in humility, and then:

TH2887

> God answered Job out of the whirlwind: Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? .... Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? .... When I made clouds its band.... shall a fault-finder contend with the almighty? Will you condemn me that you may be justified?
> [Job, 39, 1:11; 40, 2:9]

Paul's lyrical reply is strikingly similar in tone:

> How seem in the eyes of God who made all firmaments, from whose nostrils issued whatever life

> is here, or in the stars shining yonder - how seem the diffrences of man? But as time is not for God, nor space, so neither is measure nor comparison. We abase ourselves in our littleness and we do right.[p.385]

Paul affirms Gods plan for all in humility and perfect faith and this is what Lucy must learn, for in it lies the hope of her fulfilment. And Lucy does learn to accept God's plan and becomes an active agent in self determination. In Vashti, she recognises her passionate, undisciplined self "that being that I was always lulling." [p.90]. But Vashti also makes her realise that imagined reality can be made real. Without undue self exposure or haste Lucy examines various possible images of femininity, which she rejects or affirms. At the museum, Lucy is equally contemptuous of the voluptuous Cleopatra and the asexual "jeunes filles". Later she brusquely turns down the vicarious, self sacrificing life that Paulina patronisingly offers her. Lucy will no longer assume a role and gradually becomes herself. Yet while she begins to understand herself better, the barriers between her and Paul grow higher till the picture of a pale dead nun" rises and seems "an eternal barrier'

Lucy is thus gradually propelled toward an

emotional and spiritual crisis : she now acknowledges her love for Paul and the possibility of his having more binding loyalties. She is placed on a "rack of pain... driven ... almost to the brink of frenzy." [p433] Initially helpless and passive, she waits hoping her 'Greatheart', her 'guide' would come. But Lucy is not destined for any more assistance. She must act. She rouses herself from her 'dungeon' and wanders into the city drugged and sick to seek Paul. When she finds him with another woman, Lucy for the first time speaks to the reader with absolute candour and directness about her feelings. But that is not a sufficient sign of her growth, she must now reveal her feeling to Paul and she does so spontaneously. However, there is no succeeding period of happiness for Lucy as Paul leaves almost immediately on a mission.

The depths of Brontë's art and intelligence force the seperation between Paul and Lucy and finally his death at sea while returning to marry her. To understand why the novel concludes in this way, it is essential to view it within its thematic context. Jane Eyre and Shirley are primarily concerned with the problem of female autonomy and freedom within a necessary emotional relationship. In Villette, spiritual and psycological freedom and maturity assume primacy over

emotional fulfillment through marriage. Paul's departure and subsequent death became central to the completion of the theme. When Paul says "Lucy must learn to trust God and herself," he inadvertantly prophisies his death. Once his mission to provoke and assist Lucy into spiritual and psychological maturity is complete Paul becomes superfluous in the novel. This is inevitable in a novel where emotional fulfilment is an ancillary issue necessary only for completing the protagonist's development.

When Paul leaves Lucy, she has a moderate, though insufficient degree of autonomy. He is her "great heart", her "king" and she his "steward" . During Paul's long abs ence , Lucy acquires a certain degree of emotional independence which permits her to test her strength, the authenticity of her newly-acquired autonomy, and explore the possibilities of her developing personality in the privary of her solitude . No longer withdrawn from human association Lucy's solitude is not a threat to her development but provides an essential privacy for it. Paul's return would suscitate a paradox of irremediable tension. To claim total independence from him would be to break the romantic bond entirely , risking a regression and withdrawal.

To acknowledge love is to risk the disintegration of the self through the dependence an emotional relationship engenders. The three happiest years of Lucy's life is when Paul is away: when she is cherished yet distant, loving and being loved, and yet deeply committed to society and the sense of her own identity that comes through useful employment. The experiment of Frances Henri's schizophernic life, Jane's self imposed ostracism, Shirley's rapidly diminishing self confidence freedom and autonomy and Lucy's adulation of Paul leave Brontë with no alternative, but to seperate them. However it is not a harsh breaking one, that might defeat its purposes, but one that resolves paradoxes efficiently. Lucy is left an affianced bride and a single woman at once.

Happiness is not an axiomatic concommittant of fortitude and faith; and it is Lucy's spiritual maturity that is of primary importance in the scheme of the novel. Lucy still has to learn that her final allegiance is to God and not to Paul; that she is God's steward. Paul's death is the final test of the depth of Lucy's faith and commitment. How she responds to the death indicates the extent of her spiritual maturity. Early in the novel when deprived of her "dearly loved"

Lucy echos the lament of Psalm 88, which contains the lines : "thou dost overwhelm me with thy waves," and concludes with the words : "Thy dread assaults destroy me, they surround me like a flood all day long.... thou has caused lover and friend to shun me." When the final storm threatens, Lucy with strength and faith speaks the words of the Son of God; not to the seas, but to herself: "Peace , be still". From resentful resignation Lucy learns total acceptance of the ways of God. She lives by accepting the extremity of ceaseless pain , remaining all the while unshaken in the belief that :

> amidst His boundless works, is somewhere stored the secret of this last faiths' justice. I know that His treasures contain the proof as the promise of its mercy.
> [p.29]

NOTES

NOTES

1. Elizebeth Gaskell, The Life of Charlotte Bronte, (London: J.M. Dent, 1984), pp. 102-3.

1a. Ibid., p104

2. c.f. Julia Swindells, Victorian Writing and Working Women, (London: Polity Press, 1985),p.39.

3. John Ruskin, Selected Works: "Modern Manufacture and Design" (London: J.M. Dent.1969).

4. c.f. J.D. Milne, Industrial and Social Position of Women, in the Middle and Lower Ranks, (London: Chapman and Hall, 1857), p. 107.

5. Ibid.,p.105.

6. Cecil Woodham - Smith, Florence Nightingale, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1955), p.113.

7. Kieth Nield, 'Introduction', Prostitution in the Victorian Age: Debates on the Issue from Nineteenth Century Critical Journals.

8. Barbara Taylor, Eve and the New Jerusalem, (London: Virago, 1983),p. 146.

9. J.A.V. Chapple, A. Pollard (eds.), The Letters of Mrs. Gaskell, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980), p. 127.

CHAPTER 2

1. Karen Chase, Eros and Psyche, (New York and London: Mathuen, 1984), pp. 13-15.

2. Helene Moglen, Charlotte Bronte: The Self-Conceived, London: Wisconsin, 1976),ch.1.

3. Karen Chase, op.cit., p.23.

4. Ibid., p. 78.

5. Miriam Allott, Jane Eyre and Villette, (London: Macmillan, 1973), p.75.

6. Ibid., p.50.

7. Shirley Foster, Victorian Women's Fiction: Marriage, Freedom and the Individual, (Sydney, London: Croom Helm Ltd. 1985), ch.5.

8. Karen Chase, op.cit., ch.3

CHAPTER 3

1. G.H. Lewes, Edinburgh Review, (1849) c.f. Miriam Allott, The Bronte's : The Critical Heritage, (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974).

2. Laura. L. Hinkley, The Bronte's :Charlotte and Emily, (London:Hammond & Hammond, 1947), p.215.

3. Elizebeth Gaskell, op.cit., p.276.

4. Ibid., p. 258.

5. Cynthia. A. Linder, Romantic Imagery in the Novels of Charlotte Bronte, (London: Macmillan,1978), p.72.

6. Charlotte Bronte, 'Preface' Jane Eyre, (Harmonds worth: Penguin, 1985), p. 35.

7. Terry Eagleton, Myths of Power: A Marxist Study of the Bronte's (London:Macmillan, 1975), ch.3.

8. c.f. Helene Moglen, op.cit., p.152.

9. Terry Eagleton, op.cit., p.47.

10. Cynthia. A Linder, op. cit., p.[illegible]8.

10. Cynthia. A. Linder, op.cit., p.78.

11. Winifred Gerin, Charlotte Bronte: The Evolution of a Genius, (London: Oxford paperbacks, 1971), p.220.

12. Elizebeth Gaskell, op.cit., p.129.

13. Karen Chase, Eros and Psyche, (London: Methuen 1984), ch.3.

14. Terry Eagleton, op.cit., ch.4.

15. Elizabeth Gaskell, op.cit. p.363.

16. Northrope Frye, The Anatomy of Criticism, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), ch.2.

17. Ibid., ch.2.

18. c.f. Shirley Foster, Victorian Women's Fiction: Marriage Freedom and the Individual, (Sydney: Croom Helm Ltd.), ch.4.

19. Frances Cobbes, 'Introduction' Root of Bitterness (London: Croom Helm. Ltd.)

20. Patricia Beer, Reader, I Married Him, (London: Macmillan, 1975), p.108.

21. Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan. (New York: E.P. Dulton & Co., 1950), Ch.1, p.14, also see ch.2, p.177.

22. Robert C. Neville, The Cosmology of Freedom, (London: Yale University Press, 1974), p.7.

23. Mary Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (London: J.M. Dent, 1985), p.69.

CHAPTER 4

1. Charlotte Bronte, 'Introduction' The Professor, (London: J.M. Dent, 1985), p.1.

2. Elizabeth Gaskell, op.cit., p.365.

3. Barry Qualls, The Secular Pilgrim of Victorian Fiction, (London:Cambridge University Press, 1982), ch.3.

4. Thomas Carlyle, Past and Present, The Works of Thomas Carlyle, (New York: Charles Scribners, 1921) p. 133.

5. S. Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling, and the Sickness Unto Death, trans. Walter Lowie, (New York: Doubleday, 1954), pp. 159-60.

6. Michael Wheeler, "Introduction", The Art of Allusion in Victorian Fiction, (London :Macmillan 1975).

7. David Lodge, The Language of Fiction, (New York: Columbia, 1966), pp. 104-5.

8. Thomas Carlyle, op.cit., p.153.

9. Barry Qualls, op.cit., p.80.

10. Francis Quarles, c.f. Barry Qualls, op.cit., p.54.

11. Ibid.

12. Eric Vogelin, 'Post-Script on Pardise - Revolution' in *The Southern Review,* Jan.1971, p.27.

13. Helene Moglen, *Charlotte Bronte: The Self-Conceived,* p. 58.

14. Jennifer Gribble , *The Lady of Shallot in the Victorian Novel*, (London:Macmillan, 1980), ch.2.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY TEXTS

1. Bronte, Charlotte. Jane Eyre, Harmondsworth: Penguin Ltd., 1985.

2. Bronte, Charlotte. The Professor, London: J.M.Dent 1955

3. Bronte,Charlotte, Shirley, London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., (1955)

4. Bronte, Charlotte, The Angrian Tales , J.M. Dent, 1973

5. Bronte, Charlotte, Villtte, London: J .M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1961

SECONDARY TEXTS

1. Agonito, Rosemary, A History of Ideas on Women, New York: Perigree Books, 1977.

2. Allott, Miriam (ed.), Jane Eyre & Villette, London: Macmillan, 1973.

3. ________. Novelists on the Novel, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959.

4. ________ , The Brontes: The Critical Heritage, Boston : Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974.

5. Beer, Patricia, Reader, I Married Him, London: Macmillan, 1975.

6. Blom. H. Margaret, Charlotte Bronte, London:Prior Publishers, 1977.

7. Bunyan, John, The Pilgrimage Progress, London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1967.

8. Calder, Jenni, Women and Marriage in Victorian Fiction; London: Thames & Hudson Ltd.,1976.

9. Carlyle, Thomas, Sartor Resartus, Chicago: Charles Scribner's,1921.

10. ____________, Selected Works, reminiscences and letters, Ed. by Julian Synoms, London: Rupert H. Davis, 1955.

11. Cecil, David, Victorian Novelists : Essays in Revaluation, London: Methuen, 1971.

12. Chase, Karen, Eros & Psyche, New York and London: Methuen, 1984.

13. Chatterjee, Lola, Women Image Text, New Delhi: Trianka, 1986.

14. Chesterton,G.K., The Victorian Age in Literatue, London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1966.

15. Craik, W.A., The Bronte Novels, London:Methuen. 1971

16. Dickens, Charles, Complete Works: Little Dorrit, London: Oxford University Press (CentennialEd)

17. ____________, Complete Works : Hard Times, London: O.U.P. (Centennial Edition)

18. ____________, Complete Works : The Mystery of Edwin Drood, London: O.U.P. (Centennial Ed.)

19. Eagleton, Mary, Feminist Literary Theory, A reader,Oxford:Basil Blackwell, 1987.

20. Eagleton, Terry, Myths of Power : A Marxist Study of the Bronte's,London: Macmillan, 1975.

21. Eliot, George. Adam Bede, London: J,M. Dent, 1977.

22. Eliot, George, Middlemarch, London: JM.Dent,1979

23. Evans, Mary. Women in the Bible, South Africa: Oxford University Press. 1983

24. Foster, Shirley, Victorian Women's fiction: Marriage Freedom and Individual. Sydney/London: Croom Helm Ltd. 1985

25. Frye, Northrope, The Anatomy of Criticism, Princeton Princeton University Press, 1957

26. Garkell, Elizabeth, The Life of Charllotte Bronte, London: J M Dent, 1984.

27. Gerin Winifred, Charlotte Bronte: The Evolution of a Genius, London:Oxford Paperbacks, 1971.

28. Gribble, Jennifer, The Lady of Shallot in the Victorian Novel, London, Macmillan 1980.

29. Linder, Cynthia, A. Romantic Imagery in Charlotte Bronte's Novels, London:Macmillan 1978.

30. Miles, Rosalind, The Female Form: Women Writers and the Conquest of the Novel. New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul Inc.,1987.

31. Milton, John, Collected Works of John Milton, London: Oxford University Press, 1938.

32. Moglen, Helene, Charlotte Bronte: The Self Conceived, London: Wisconsin Press, 1976.

33. Moi, Torril, Sexual /Textual Politics:: Feminist Literary Theory, London: Methuen,1985.

34. Pinion J.B. A Bronte Companion, London:Macmilan Press,1975.

35. Qualls, Barry, The Secular Pilgrims of Victorian Fiction, London: Cambridge University Press, 1982.

36. Ruskin, John, Selected Writings , Peter Quennel(ed) London: Falcon Press,1952.

37. Showalter, Elaine. A Literature of Their Own. London : Cox Wyman Ltd. 1977

38. Shultz,Max, Paradise Preserved: Recreations of Eden in the Eighteenth and Ninetenth Century England, Great Britain:Cambridge University Press, 1985

39. Swindells, Julia, Victorian Writing and Working Women, London: Polity Press in association with Basil Blackwell, 1985.

40. Watson, George, The English Ideology, London: Allen Lane., 1973.

41. Watt, George. The Fallen Woman in the Nineteenth Century English Novel. Sydney: Croom Helm Ltd.,1984.

42. Watt, Ian, The Rice of the Novel: Studies in Defoe Richardson and Fielding, London: Perigrine Books, 1985.

43. Wheeler, Michael. The Art of Allusion in Victorian Fiction, London: Macmillan, 1975.

4. Wollstonecraft, Mary, Vindications of the Rights of Woman .; Mill. John S. The Subjection of "Women London, J.M.Dent, 1985.

44. The Holy Bible (Catholic Version),London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd. 1960.

ARTICLES

1. Vaid, Sudesh. 'Ideologies on Women in Nineteenth Century Britain: 1850's - 1870's.' Economic and Political Weekly October 26 1985) (pp 63-67) Vol.XX No.43. Review of Women Studies.

2. Nield, Kieth. 'Introduction', Prostitution in the Victorian Age: Debates on the Issue from Nineteenth Century Critical Journals,