

A Professorial Nation:
The Pedagogical Gardens of William Crimsworth, Jane Eyre, and Lucy Snowe

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Table of Contents

Chapter One: Becoming <i>Émile</i> : The Influences on Charlotte Brontë.....	5
Chapter Two: Reason Was My Physician: The Bildungsroman of Professor	17
William Crimsworth	
The Garden as a Metaphor.....	17
Self-Awareness and Personal Growth.....	23
Brontë’s Critique of Victorian Pedagogy.....	30
Chapter Three: Jane Eyre and her Pupil: The Governess and the Garden.....	32
Young Jane: From Gateshead to Lowood.....	33
Jane as a Governess: Discovering Thornfield.....	43
Jane: The Non-Traditional Student.....	48
Chapter Four: The Cultivation of Lucy Snowe.....	52
Young Lucy: Nursery Governess to Nurse.....	52
Cultivating Lucy: The Novice Teacher.....	56
Harvesting a Headmistress: Cultivating Perfection in the Garden.....	65
Conclusion.....	74
Works Cited.....	81

Chapter One:

Becoming *Émile*: The Influences on Charlotte Brontë

“Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith,”¹ says young Jane Eyre after feasting on a slice of bread with butter in the company of her teacher, Miss Temple, and friend, Helen. Though the dismal air of *Jane Eyre*’s Lowood School surrounds these three individuals, Miss Temple cultivates a nurturing environment of peace and sanctuary that yields bountiful fellowship reminiscent of a flourishing garden. She recognizes the needs of her students, providing them with food that not only nourishes their bodies, but also nourishes their minds. As a result, Jane, who entered Miss Temple’s small apartment hungry, leaves satisfied. The implication here, for author Charlotte Brontë, is intentional: a safe learning environment encourages growth and fosters independence.

In Brontë’s works, safe learning environments are most commonly found in gardens, providing spaces—literally and metaphorically—dedicated to individual growth. These spaces are not isolated, however, as they are located in bustling towns such as *Villette* and schoolyards like those of *Jane Eyre*. Likewise, the individual does not grow in isolation; rather, development is a process that is fostered by an individual’s interaction with his or her environment. In essence, the individual grows to understand the garden, and upon this achievement, the individual experiences maximum cultivation. Such thought is the foundation of Brontë’s educational philosophy. While the metaphorical garden provides structure for individual development, it also steers Brontë in her discovery of the self; she recognizes that human nature is different for everyone, and as such, this difference should not be a hindrance to personal growth.

¹ See Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* 89; Young Jane’s recitation of Proverbs 15:17 is an indication of her hunger for knowledge, paralleling King Solomon’s desire for Godly wisdom.

Discussions of growth and achieving independence are not arbitrary for Brontë, for she was raised in the midst of the Industrial Revolution of mid-nineteenth century England in which upwardly mobile members of the working class sustained themselves with self-improvement rhetoric. A redistribution of wealth contributed to an increase in the size of the middle class, who began to feel the effects of increased educational opportunities for the lower, working class. Having spent most of her life in the West Riding District of Yorkshire, Brontë would have been familiar with the area political activities of Samuel Smiles, who lectured widely, conveying his message on self-improvement. His seminal work, *Self-Help* (1859), encouraged the working class, including its women, to develop their own skills and knowledge base in a time when there were few professional opportunities for them.² Self-improvement via education was a means for the working classes to gain autonomy from the middle and upper classes in a developing industrial economy; hence, self-cultivation was necessary in establishing individual independence—a point that, for Brontë, indicates the climax of one's education.

Self-improvement rhetoric influenced Victorian women, among them Charlotte Brontë, to work to gain economic and personal independence. In *Victorian Feminism*, Philippa Levine notes that “[w]omen saw education as the key to a broad range of other freedoms” (26). As had been the case for many years, educated women who needed to provide for themselves were often limited to working as governesses, living in the private households of wealthy families and instructing their children. These “situations,” as they were called, further oppressed women of the working class while upper and middle class mothers demoted the governess to the role of companion for the children. In her article, “The Victorian Governess: Status Incongruence in Family and Society,” Jeanne Peterson comments that the governess was an indication of a

² See Emily Walker Heady, “‘Must I Render an Account?’: Genre and Self-Narration in Charlotte Brontë’s *Villette*.” See also Alexander Tyrrell “Class Consciousness in Early Victorian Britain: Samuel Smiles, Leeds Politics, and the Self-Help Creed” for a discussion on Smiles’s career and influence on the Victorian working classes.

patriarch's economic power, and though she was kept out of sight from visitors, she was often the center of conversation (4-5). But the institution of the governess did more for lofty Victorian families than underscore their status in the upper echelon of society: she contributed to the education and rearing of their children. In lieu of the mother, the governess was expected to supervise the children all day. As such, she naturally developed her own educational theory, identifying that her duty to survey children constantly was the result of parents who desired to prevent the development of immoral behavior in their children (Peterson 8).³ Nevertheless, she worked in the spirit of self-improvement, desiring to find an independent space of her own in an oppressive society.

Likewise, Charlotte Brontë embraced the progressive self-help rhetoric of the era, working as a governess in order to help provide for her family. Though her experiences as a governess played a significant role in the composition of *Jane Eyre*, she did not enjoy life in this occupation. During her first situation with the Sidgwick family, she endured adversity from rude children and ungrateful parents. Her second situation with the White family was more enjoyable as those children were somewhat affectionate, but Brontë still struggled to identify herself as independent. In a letter dated June 8, 1839, Brontë writes to her younger sister, Emily, "I see now more clearly than I have ever done before that a private governess has no existence, is not considered as a living and rational being. . . while she is teaching the children, working for them, amusing them, it is all right. If she steals a moment for herself she is a nuisance" (13).⁴ Such remarks are characteristic of the life of the governess that Peterson portrays, and further confirms Brontë's not-quite-a-lady status in society (10). Nevertheless, Brontë, like many other self-

³ Peterson cites Louisa Hoare, author of *Hints for the Improvement of Early Education* (1826), in which a mother writes to her nursery-maid, emphasizing that children require "consistent and controlled systems" in order to prevent disrespect and disobedience toward authority (9).

⁴ See *Selected Letters* by Charlotte Brontë and edited by Margaret Smith. Here, Brontë documents her travels, her relationships, her schooling, and her situations.

improving women, preserved in her writings her embrace of progressive industry and its educational implications in the midst of minimal opportunity and low wages. It is through the conduct manuals, letters, and literature composed by and for Victorian women that we begin to discover the original thought behind modern educational philosophy from women who, first-hand, engaged with and taught children in their natural environments. Women's developing pedagogical practices, structures, and philosophies were especially publicized and critiqued within popular literature, particularly the most "female" of all literary forms: the novel. Indeed, Brontë's educational philosophy was influenced by her teaching experience as well as shaped by her own education and rearing, and with the publications of her own work, including *Jane Eyre* (1847), *Villette* (1853), and *The Professor* (1857), we see her educational philosophy in full bloom.

For Brontë, the domestic education that a governess provided Victorian children within the boundaries of the private home and garden served as an educational model—a model that nineteenth-century pedagogues would later attempt to replicate in a formal learning environment. The governess, much like her successor, the teacher, was responsible for teaching Victorian children several subjects. Provided that the pupils were most often young girls, these subjects ranged from French and English reading and writing to sewing, singing, and drawing. The governess was responsible for lesson planning and designing activity that both engaged and cultivated her pupil. To the governess's advantage, children were already in their natural environment when learning at home; therefore, their growth was encouraged through discovery in a place of exploration that was natural to them.

Ultimately, formal education such as kindergarten was designed to replace the governess and her domestic instruction in an effort to achieve a standardized learning system. Brontë

recognizes and exemplifies the shift from at-home instruction to systemized education in her work. As a governess to Adèle, Jane Eyre gains the necessary teaching experience that consequently enables her to run the Morton Village Charity School and equips her to judge the formal education Adèle receives when away at Irish boarding school. Here, Brontë challenges systemized education, and Jane determines that Adèle's school is unfit for her, finding a different school that better suits her learning needs. In a similar scenario, Lucy's experience as a nursery governess to Paulina contributes to the cultivation of Lucy as a teacher and provides her with experience to later become an instructor at the Rue Fossette and then an independent head schoolmistress. In her work, Brontë depicts the governess as a capable woman in spite of her social class and need for employment. And though she was underrated and underappreciated at the time, we now understand her foundational role in pedagogy, not just teaching individual children in the home but formalizing the techniques that would later be used in standardized classrooms.

Thus, although the Victorian governess—as an occupation and a voice—was often hushed within her own pedagogical space, her presence was felt as formal education began taking shape, with theorists and philosophers trying to identify how to implement the nurturing environment of a domestic education—including, often, the use of garden spaces in instruction—into a standardized classroom. Such theorists include the undeniable influence of eighteenth-century German philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau and his example of domestic education in *Émile* (1760).⁵ Stressing that “plants are shaped by cultivation and men by education” (6), Rousseau idealizes the garden as a sanctuary for growth and learning in which an individual is enabled to interact with his or her surroundings, thus gaining life experience and increasing

⁵ Though Jean-Jacques Rousseau's work reflects misogynist views and rhetoric, his work promotes educational theory as a topic of wide discussion.

intellectual ability. Elizabeth Gargano explores early pedagogical approaches through literature, defining Rousseau's explicit connection between the language of gardening and individual growth: "as the child cultivates the garden, the garden. . . cultivates the child" (92).⁶ While Rousseau employs gardening rhetoric in his educational philosophy, he also solidifies the garden as a metaphor.

Rousseau specifically impacted nineteenth-century pedagogues Johann Pestalozzi and Friedrich Froebel who differed in theories on how and when natural education begins for a child. While Pestalozzi defined natural education as influence and instruction from the mother,⁷ Froebel agreed that natural education was the most beneficial for children, but argued for them to begin attending kindergarten by seven years of age to promote learning through interaction with other children. Froebel agreed with Rousseau and encouraged the concept of kindergarten as it took the place of the otherwise "natural education" a child would have received at home, and in 1837, Froebel established the first kindergarten, aiming to encourage the growth of the child's mind through natural surroundings and self-motivated activity.

Like Froebel, Brontë also supports natural education, but furthers this philosophy by questioning the pedagogical motive. As an adult, Jane works as a governess, caring for the motherless Adèle. Jane's role in teaching Adèle—like that of the traditional governess—creates a familial bond between them, demonstrating how education can successfully serve as a substitute for family. Jane's love life, however, offers a different perspective: faulty education can lead to faulty family relationships. For example, in *Jane Eyre*, St. John teaches Jane a foreign language, but his self-centered approach alienates her. They later discover they are cousins, yet he chooses to propose to Jane, hoping their union together would benefit his missionary efforts. Jane

⁶ See *Reading Victorian Schoolrooms: Childhood and Education in Nineteenth-Century Fiction*.

⁷ See Richard Aldrich *School and Society in Victorian Britain: Joseph Payne and the New World of Education* for an explanation of Pestalozzi and Froebel's two year study together in Yverdon (233-41).

declines his marriage proposal because of his selfish motives and her inability to truly love him, resulting in a broken relationship, and she instead returns to her first, true love, Rochester.

Certainly, for Brontë, natural education is valuable when implemented appropriately, but when used for ulterior motives, it leads to weak instruction as well as weak family ties.

The idea of nature plays a significant role in two respects in Brontë's approach to education. First, Brontë uses the concept of nature to preserve individuality, insisting that human nature is different for everyone. Each individual has his or her own habits and these habits drive his or her decisions. Brontë's definition of nature is informed by Rousseau who explains it as "merely habit" as a result of consistent conditions. Though, once the conditions are altered, "nature reasserts herself" (6-7). The narrators in Brontë's work, including William Crimsworth, Jane Eyre, and Lucy Snowe, frequently critique the nature of individuals and how it affects their interaction with others as well as their environment. In particular, *The Professor's* Crimsworth frequently comments on the nature of his students at the Rue d'Isabelle, pointing out their learning tendencies as well as character attributes and flaws, but as he does so, he is better enabled to guide students to identify and strengthen their weaknesses. Thus, individual nature contributes to teaching effectiveness as it defines the scope of human interaction. Interestingly, Brontë invokes a second definition of nature: the physical world that surrounds us. She indicates that gardens encourage intellectual growth because they are havens from judgment. A flourishing garden is indicative of growth and bounty and serves as a metaphor for the growth of the individual. This idea parallels Rousseau and his gardening rhetoric.

Of course, Brontë's depictions of her educational philosophy are not limited to natural education, and neither was her work as a governess her only influence; Charlotte Brontë's father, Patrick, directly impacted the development of her pedagogy. Reverend Patrick Brontë is widely

documented as a well-educated man, having taught himself to read and earning a Bachelor of Arts degree from St. John's College in 1806. His self-education and formal academic exposure inspired him to raise his children in what some considered to be a peculiar way. In *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857), Elizabeth Gaskell explains that "he always disapproved of marriages and constantly talked against them" (603). Though it was expected that young women desire to marry in order to ensure some degree of financial security, it seems that he, too, embraced self-help rhetoric, empowering his children with education as a path to liberation from societal constraints. But perhaps more importantly, Reverend Brontë was familiar with the teachings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Gaskell hypothesizes that Reverend Brontë's theories behind the education and management of children were influenced by Rousseau (51), as does Helene Moglen in her critical work, *Charlotte Brontë: The Self Conceived*, in which she discusses the Reverend's philosophy of child rearing. He believed in the importance of individual freedom and the need to explore the environment outside of the house, building an "active out-of-door life." His library was available to his children to explore at their leisure as were his political views, though liberal, often speaking up about the unjust treatment of women and his sympathy for the working classes (Moglen 24-25). Reverend Brontë took a liberal approach to raising his daughters, likely in an effort to prepare them for the harsh, developing industry and the female oppression he knew they would face as working adult women. While even his children considered him too liberal at times, his influence on them, particularly Charlotte, proves to be fundamental in the literary work they would produce later in life.

Reverend Brontë's emphasis on freedom for his children in their intellectual development encouraged the growth of their imaginative capabilities. In *The Brontë Myth*, Lucasta Miller criticizes Gaskell's *Life* because it depicts the Brontë sisters as miserable, having been raised in

an overly gothic environment, focusing on their personal sufferings rather than their personal achievements (100). But the reality of the matter is that Charlotte Brontë's personal sufferings inspired and drove her work from a young age forward, including the childhood plays that she and her siblings wrote in which they developed imaginative kingdoms and stories, exploring life and circumstance within them. Reverend Brontë's practice of encouraging his children's imagination and the evidence of the Brontë children's imaginative growth echoes the words of Rousseau: "The world of imagination is boundless" (45). For the Brontë children, their learning space had no limitations; thus, the world was their garden, and the imaginative play of Charlotte Brontë's childhood influenced her employment of imagination that would be emphasized in the educational philosophy found in her work.

Charlotte Brontë's use of imagination in her work illuminates her educational theory; she was not an intentional pedagogue, but nonetheless, the direct influence of her father and indirect influence of Rousseau is evident in her writing. "Jane Eyre's Imagination" by Jennifer Gribble examines Brontë's attempt to balance realistic scenes, such as the events at *Jane Eyre's* Lowood School, with the power of imagination. Gribble claims that Brontë would have agreed with George Henry Lewes, the first critic of *Jane Eyre* in December of 1847, that imagination is a necessary component of understanding and exploring reality (281). Yet, in Charlotte Brontë's work, Rousseau informs her definition of imagination as it "enlarges the bounds of possibility for us, whether for good or ill, and therefore stimulates and feeds desires by the hope of satisfying them" (44). For Rousseau, individual learning is shaped through personal interaction with his or her surrounding environment—specifically, the garden. Interaction with the garden environment is a fundamental aspect of an individual's quest for independence and self-awareness. While Brontë emphasizes the need for imagination in learning, she also necessitates an engagement

with nature by emphasizing the garden's role in the development of creative thought.

While Brontë relies on Rousseau's definition of imagination, she also draws on the well-known definitions of it offered by William Wordsworth and Samuel Coleridge as she expounds the connection between imagination and personal development. In the preface of their collaborative work, *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), Wordsworth asserts the necessity of imagination in creative thought, as it allows us to synthesize past and present experience in order to set a direction for the future. While Coleridge agrees with Wordsworth, he takes a different approach, emphasizing his understanding of imagination in his work *Biographia Literaria* (1817), in which he highlights imagination as a means for an individual to identify "the living Power," or the divine, and achieve personal perfection, a synthesis of our current self—that exists as a result of the past and present—and future maturity that is achieved in a union with the divine. Brontë clearly depicts her understanding of Wordsworthian and Coleridgean theory, especially during the scene in *Jane Eyre* when young Jane's friend, Helen, teaches Jane to reconceptualize her surroundings. Jane exclaims, "How the new feeling bore me up!" when she realizes that she can overcome the mental inferiority that Lowood has imposed upon her (Brontë 81). Brontë also demonstrates her conception of imagination when Jane and Helen contemplate life after death. Ultimately, Jane manages to reconcile imagination and life, embracing rejection and finding freedom in death. For Helen, perfection is achieved after death when she is united with God. Whereas Coleridge points out that the individual attempts to achieve perfection, Brontë demonstrates that personal perfection is attainable through Helen's symbolic death.

As Brontë, following Wordsworth, points out, imagination enables us to understand reality and our surroundings, but in order to achieve maximum cultivation, the individual must come to an understanding of him or herself. In *Villette*, for example, Lucy Snowe lacks intimate

family relationships that provide a sense of personal identity, and as a result, she seeks to cultivate her identity through relationships with others. As Karen Chase puts it, “Lucy Snowe enters *Villette* as a character without definition, a name without identity, and a voice without origins. It is important that we take the early vacuity seriously and recognize that, whatever lies in the depths, we must respect the barren surface” (67).⁸ Through her process of self-discovery, Lucy grows into an understanding of herself, but in doing so, she cultivates an inner self that is separate from her outer life. Janice Carlisle argues in “The Face in the Mirror: *Villette* and the Conventions of Autobiography” that the individual’s memory typically serves as a means to discover personal identity. But Lucy, who does not have—or never reveals—any family, is unable to draw on recollections from the past to ascertain a current identity. Thus, a void of identity exists that the process of imaginative self-discovery—her own education—must fill. The cultivation of Lucy’s inner self paradoxically thus enables her to understand her outer life.

For Brontë, the cultivation of the inner self occurs through various means—one of which is the excessive surveillance of the learning environment that we see in *Villette*, pointing to Brontë’s demonstration of her ability and willingness to move beyond her influences. In *Villette*, Madame Beck, the head schoolmistress of the Rue Fossette, sees learning spaces as opportunities to exercise control. She surveys the classrooms and the school’s adjoining garden in order to maintain a constant awareness of her student population and staff. Though such heavy surveillance contradicts both Rousseau’s and Reverend Brontë’s beliefs that freedom in learning spaces leads to greater discovery, Madame Beck’s restrictive pedagogical system provides Lucy Snowe with an opportunity to develop an autonomous self, and Brontë with an opportunity to illustrate a pedagogical approach that expands upon what she demonstrates in *The Professor* and

⁸ See *Eros and Psyche: The Representation of Personality in Charlotte Brontë, Charles Dickens, and George Eliot*. Chase primarily critiques an alternate self, represented by Jane Eyre, but here she impresses the point of Lucy’s estrangement and ultimate self-discovery (66-91).

Jane Eyre. Lucy's discovery of her identity requires her to cultivate a private life of which Madame Beck is unaware—an imaginative recovery of the inner self that occurs not in spite of but because of the pressurized learning environment that she inhabits. The establishment of Lucy's school marks the climax of her self-cultivation, the culmination of her identity in separate selves, and the commencement of a new and independent Lucy.

Charlotte Brontë's works reflect the dynamics of "self-help" rhetoric, the oppressed governess, and educational ideology that depends on the natural environment. Drawing on her personal experience as a governess, her formative years in the midst of rapid industrial expansion in Yorkshire, and the direct influence of her father, Brontë develops characters who suffer hardships, travel for employment, earn little pay, and deal with Fate as it presents itself. Like Brontë, her characters work out of necessity. And, like Brontë, they earn a living by working as educators. Brontë's deliberate and systematic use of Rousseauian educational concepts argues for a politically radical position: that everyone, ranging from the pauper children in the charity schools of *Jane Eyre* to the aristocratic boarding school students in *Villette*, needs to self-improve and self-cultivate. Brontë's representation of individual maturity insists on a partitioned self: one, veiled identity that is internally cultivated yet contiguous to one, public identity. Through this, the whole individual successfully functions in society, managing a private life that is protected from authority, yet able to flourish while under the scrutiny of a surveyed learning environment.

Chapter Two:

Reason Was My Physician: The Bildungsroman of Professor William Crimsworth

Brontë's definition of nature and the role of the garden as a metaphor for the growth of the individual form the foundation of her educational philosophy. Through Crimsworth's growth in *The Professor*, Brontë's first full-length work, we begin to identify Brontë's theory that the individual is cultivated. The bildungsroman of Crimsworth is, in essence, his discovery of himself as a pedagogue throughout the course of the narrative. In *The Professor*, using the garden as a metaphor for the growth of the individual, Brontë begins to articulate her theory of education, asserting that an individual must first discover his or her human nature in order to experience intellectual growth.

I. The Garden as Metaphor

The metaphor of the garden steers Brontë's thoughts, as her understanding of the physical garden develops and expands into a greater understanding of the metaphorical garden that structures the whole of human development. This metaphorical garden, which exists without the merit of being fully understood by any individual, and which is not necessarily even identified or defined, pressures individuals to grow to understand it. For Brontë, then, achieving an understanding of the garden as a metaphor yields maximum cultivation of the individuals who inhabit it.

As Brontë uses the garden as both a physical location and a way of structuring individual development, she demonstrates Rousseauian influence on her thought. Rousseau's terminology appears in Brontë's use of the garden as both setting and metaphor. And while Brontë explores the garden as a recreational place for leisure and a representation of intellectual development, she exemplifies Rousseau's terms in her fiction—terms she inherited from her scholarly father as

well as the proponents of Rousseauian education in Victorian society. Gargano analyzes the “school garden movement” and Rousseau’s philosophical impact on the Victorian era, pointing out that in *Émile*, the garden serves as both a metaphor for the schoolroom and the literal schoolroom (89-96), paralleling Brontë’s approach. Throughout *Émile*, Rousseau relies heavily on the child’s ability to interact with his surrounding environment in order to develop into an independently functioning adult. The child’s exploration of the surrounding environment further allows him or her to learn about the world outside of that environment, thus stretching the bounds of understanding and becoming more self-aware. This practice facilitates the reasoning and self-cultivation necessary to positively contribute to industrial society. For both Rousseau and Brontë, the garden serves a function beyond its physical existence. Yet while Rousseau’s depiction of the garden is limited to the schoolroom, Brontë’s use of the garden takes on varying shapes, not only serving as a metaphor for the individual’s growth, but also teaching the individuals within it to understand its significance.

Brontë’s depiction of the garden evolves in *The Professor* through William Crimsworth, the novel’s narrator and protagonist. Crimsworth is orphaned at a young age and raised by his two uncles who send him to study at Eton College for ten years. Upon returning home from Eton to Bigben Close, Crimsworth refuses both a position as a clergyman as well as his uncles’ proposition to marry a cousin. He instead chooses to follow in the footsteps of his father and brother, Edward, becoming a tradesman. He has an estranged relationship with his brother, who is ten years his senior, but ultimately Edward hires Crimsworth as a clerk. During this time, Crimsworth befriends Mr. Hunsden, a prominent manufacturer and mill owner with social contacts that eventually enable Crimsworth to utilize his education and procure a position as a “professor,” or teacher, at Rue Royale, an all-male school in Brussels. Now freed from his

uncles' financial support and his brother's tyranny, Crimsworth is empowered to govern his choices such as his place of residence, salary, romantic relationships, and instructional practices as a professor. Brontë uses the shaping of various gardens along Crimsworth's journey from Eton to Brussels to draw a parallel between his professional evolution and personal narrative. These gardens serve as both setting and metaphor for Brontë and Crimsworth, illuminating the role of the garden in the growth of the individual.

Early on, Brontë establishes the garden as a prized possession to Hunsden and Mademoiselle Reuter. The first presentation of a garden is found toward the beginning of *The Professor* when Crimsworth is still in Eton. Hunsden exclaims, "William! what a fool you are to live in those dismal lodgings of Mrs. King's when you might take rooms here in Grove Street, and have a garden like me!" (Brontë 32). Here, the garden indicates economic opportunity and wisdom—an indication that the choices that are made in the present will affect the future. Hunsden's comment implies that if Crimsworth were to upgrade his living situation, he would be in a more favorable position from which to approach life. Crimsworth refutes Hunsden and denies the value of the garden, stating, "I should be too far from the mill," yet upon arrival to the Rue Royale, Crimsworth is disappointed when he receives his room assignment and the window is boarded up, inhibiting his view of the garden next door (Brontë 53-54). Brontë is careful to place the garden of the neighboring school, the Rue d'Isabelle, in a location that serves as a site of surveillance, affording Crimsworth both pleasure and insight as the plot develops. Crimsworth's desire to have, or at least to see a garden is indicative of its value as both a commodity and a growth opportunity.

In addition, Mademoiselle Reuter recognizes her garden as both a commodity and a source of inspiration for her students that she would not be able to find elsewhere: "It is my

garden, monsieur, which makes me retain this house, otherwise I should probably have removed to larger and more commodious premises long since; but you see I could not take my garden with me, and I should scarcely find one so large and pleasant anywhere else in town” (Brontë 63). Crimsworth agrees with Reuter, judging that the value in the garden cannot be replaced by another. Thus, it would be counterproductive to sacrifice the garden of the Rue d’Isabelle for a larger building because more learning will take place in the existing garden. In contrast to her belief about the garden, Rueter supports a frequent change in instructors, explaining, “I have found it necessary to change frequently—a change of instructors is often beneficial to the interests of a school; it gives life and variety to the proceedings; it amuses the pupils, and suggests to the parents the idea of exertion and progress” (Bronte 123). The garden offers consistency and stability at the Rue Fossette in place of instructors who are dispensable. For Reuter, rotating pedagogues is a means to effectively refresh the instructional methods in her school without sacrificing the natural benefits that can only be derived from her garden. Terry Eagleton’s argument in *Myths of Power* holds that the ideological slant of *The Professor* “rests firmly on progress and enterprise” (95), supporting Mademoiselle Rueter’s claim that a smaller garden would lend to less business and, ultimately, cultivate fewer students.

The garden is thus not only a prized possession as physical property, but it also represents knowledge as it is situated between the Rue Royale and the Rue d’Isabelle. Clearly, Crimsworth is captivated by the garden at Mademoiselle Reuter’s all-female establishment:

It was a long, not very broad strip of cultured ground, with an alley bordered by enormous old fruit trees down the middle; there was a sort of lawn, a parterre of rose-trees, some flower-borders, and, on the far side, a thickly planted copse of

lilacs, laburnums, and acacias. It looked pleasant, to me—very pleasant, so long a time had elapsed since I had seen a garden of any sort. (Brontë 63)

Crimsworth finds the flourishing nature of the garden to be an “advantage” over Monsieur Pelet’s all-male establishment, though this advantage is more than just increased property value in downtown Brussels. For Brontë, the advantage lies emblematically in the Rue d’Isabelle’s ability to cultivate the intellect of its students—similar to Rousseau’s garden in which the setting nurtures Émile’s mind.

The comparison between the garden of the Rue d’Isabelle and the Garden of Eden indicates that knowledge is necessary in spite of the challenges and hardships it can cause. The garden is charged with mythical significance almost immediately. Crimsworth considers the garden “mysterious,” stating, “I shall gaze both on the angels and their Eden” (61). As Crimsworth admires the garden, he recognizes that it possesses a mystical quality that brings pleasure and the opportunity to gain wisdom as from a well-kept secret. He observes that the color of Mademoiselle Reuter’s cheeks is “like the bloom on a good apple, which is as sound at the core as it is red on the rind” (Brontë 64). In an apparent reversal of the biblical account of the Garden of Eden, Crimsworth suggests that eating the fruit of Mademoiselle Reuter’s garden leads to knowledge that gives life. Yet, as Brontë knows, eating fruit in biblical Eden leads to bondage, for in this instance, the garden is also a façade. Knowledge is power, but only to those who are able to control it. Reuter is corrupted by the power she has in her garden as proven by her manipulative approach to gain Crimsworth as an employee.⁹ Crimsworth is at first blind to Reuter’s corruption because of his infatuation with her; similarly, he is blind to the danger of the

⁹ Mademoiselle Reuter sends her mother, Madame Reuter, and friend, Madame Pelet, to interview Crimsworth for a teaching position at Rue d’Isabelle. At first, Crimsworth is apprehensive, wondering if sexual promiscuity may be the reason for the impromptu meeting, but it is later revealed that Mademoiselle Reuter desired for Crimsworth to be screened by her mother and friend before inviting him to visit the all-female school (Brontë 57-60).

knowledge that is to be gained from the garden due to his attraction to it. The double-edged knowledge to be gained from Reuter's garden is disguised by its beauty. Brontë's allusion to Eden warns readers not to misunderstand the garden as a metaphor because a metaphor—unless carefully chosen and interpreted rightly—can misrepresent the true meaning.

Crimsworth's diction and imagery promote gardens as a place of knowledge in which we should guard ourselves, as well as depicts garden settings with positive energy that gives rise to the idea of cultivation. For Crimsworth, gardens are peaceful and safe environments:

I was early up and walking in the large park-like meadow surrounding the house. The autumn sun, rising over the ——shire hills, disclosed a pleasant country; woods brown and mellow varied the fields from which the harvest had been lately carried; a river, gliding between the woods, caught on its surface the somewhat cold gleam of the October sun and sky; at frequent intervals along the banks of the river, tall, cylindrical chimneys, almost like slender round towers, indicated the factories which the trees half concealed. (Brontë 17)

Such a poetic description of Crimsworth's first encounter with Crimsworth Hall and the surrounding grounds reveals the neutral and relaxed environment that garden settings produce. More so, Crimsworth is very aware of the geometry of nature and uses mathematical terms to reveal the educational landscape of the garden such as "surface," "frequent intervals," "cylindrical," "round," and "half concealed." This rhetoric mirrors Norman Brosterman's explanation of the language of kindergarten:¹⁰ "Kindergarten's universal, perfect, alternative language of geometric form cultivated children's innate ability to observe, reason, express, and

¹⁰ While the terms are not interchangeable, both gardens and kindergartens can be identified as places of learning and obtaining knowledge. Historically, gardens were encouraged as an aspect of the kindergarten classroom to provide students with a personal space in which they could interact with their environment.

create” (B64).¹¹ Yet the “schooling” that happens in Crimsworth’s garden is less mathematical than interpersonal. As Crimsworth considers his brother’s belligerent personality and the possibility of working for him, the garden setting allows him to “self-school” and “scrutinize” himself. Ultimately, Crimsworth acts in a manner “contradictory to [his] nature” and wishes Edward a good morning. In a brief moment of observing the garden, Crimsworth experiences growth of which he was previously incapable, choosing maturely to greet his domineering brother affectionately, rather than reciprocating Edward’s unpleasant demeanor. The garden, in short, both encourages and serves as a figure for Crimsworth’s personal growth—and for Brontë, this sort of growth ought to be the goal of education. Indeed, Brosterman argues that kindergarten, born in the nineteenth century, is a diluted version of the original activities intended to foster an appreciation of natural harmony and an ability to interact with nature (B64). Nature and the process of education go hand-in-hand.

II. Self-Awareness and Personal Growth

Crimsworth’s own process of development and eventual flourishing enable him to cultivate similar growth in others, and it is through the development of Crimsworth as a pedagogue that Brontë’s educational philosophy begins to take shape for the reader. Crimsworth experiences substantial growth as he evolves from a tradesman to a professor, and he exemplifies Brontë’s ideology of self-cultivation, adapting to circumstances, and seeking self-improvement.

As Brontë discusses human nature in *The Professor*, she focuses on both the child and the adult in order to give an adequate representation of the process of self-discovery across the span of life, and here again, Rousseau’s influence is evident. Rousseau traces the development of a

¹¹ See “Kindergarten and Modernism” (1997).

child into a man in *Émile*.¹² Brontë recycles Rousseau's terms and concepts as they appear in her discussions of human nature and personal growth. For instance, Brontë analyzes the nature of children to demonstrate the necessity of the element of discovery in learning, as well as the process by which it happens.¹³ Following Rousseau, Brontë shows that during childhood, children learn how to learn by interacting with their environment, generating new knowledge, and challenging their existing understanding. Thus, in Rousseauian fashion, Crimsworth takes the time to assess his student Francis Henri's approach to learning, determining her strengths and quirks, and demonstrating Brontë's understanding that the malleability of the youthful mind lends to discovery:

Human beings – human children especially – seldom deny themselves the pleasure of exercising a power which they are conscious of possessing, even though that power consist only in a capacity to make others wretched: a pupil whose sensations are duller than those of his instructor, while his nerves are tougher and his bodily strength perhaps greater, has an immense advantage over that instructor, and he will generally use it relentlessly, because the very young, very healthy, very thoughtless, know neither how to sympathize nor how to spare.
(104-05)

Brontë reflects on the nature of children in a similar fashion to Rousseau, arguing that children have a greater capacity than adults to learn because they are more flexible, lacking “nerves” and “bodily strength” that may otherwise inhibit them from intellectual growth. For example,

¹² In Book I of *Emile*, Rousseau contends that a child's interaction with his or her environment ultimately shapes his or her ability to function as an independent adult.

¹³ Brontë's analysis of the process of learning predates Swiss philosopher Jean Piaget's work in *The Language and Thought of a Child* (1925). Piaget (1896-1980) pioneered the constructivist movement, arguing that children develop in stages and experience intellectual growth according to their interactions with their surroundings. The use of new knowledge lends to more complex thinking as it encourages critical thinking and problem solving, a point that Brontë makes over 75 years sooner. Like Brontë, Piaget, having studied and worked at the Academy of Geneva, also known as the *Institut Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, was certainly influenced by Rousseau.

Rousseau questions a mother's choice to swaddle her child, keeping it from stirring and stretching its limbs (10-11). As Rousseau presents the physical binding of a child as a means to stunt his or her physical development, Brontë critiques the intellectual binding of a child as a means to stunt his or her intellectual discovery.

The sort of "binding" that children undergo is evident in the way they later interact with their world as adults; Brontë argues that self-awareness is a requisite to intellectual and social growth. In a dialogue between Hunsden and Crimsworth, she suggests that the outward actions of an individual provide limited insight into his or her internal cultivation: "the conclusion to be drawn as to your character depends upon the nature of the motives which guide your conduct" (Brontë 33-34). The conduct of Brontë's characters is dictated by their motives, and while an understanding of their motives may never be achieved with complete certainty, we recognize the mature adult's ability to veil his or her emotions behind his or her actions. Similarly, we can identify an individual's inability to communicate as an adult, or his struggle to learn, as a result of a lack of awareness of the self. For Brontë, it is not until discovery of personal nature takes place that an adult may begin to experience intellectual growth and interact in a mature fashion with the outside world. Therefore, if an adult was not afforded the opportunity to self-discover and to explore the environment as a child, then he is intellectually behind later in life.

Crimsworth's constant awareness of human nature allows him to continue the process of self-cultivation that he has undertaken. Frequent commentary such as "My nature was not his nature" (Brontë 21), "Human nature is perverse" (Brontë 42), and "God knows I am not by nature vindictive" (Brontë 89) indicates Crimsworth's awareness of himself, and his ability to evaluate his own character lends to his ability to recognize his own potential, both positive and negative. As Crimsworth summarizes an encounter with his brother, he draws attention to the

power that resides in an awareness of his own distinctiveness: “My southern accent annoyed him; the degree of education evinced in my language irritated him; my punctuality, industry, and accuracy, fixed his dislike, and gave it the high flavor and poignant relish of envy; he feared that I too should one day make a successful tradesman” (Brontë 28). For Brontë, awareness of self provides the means to achieve personal potential. A successful man is aware of his education and professional ability, and he is aware of their effect on others as well.

However, for Brontë, a personal awareness of self is not enough to navigate successfully through the world of adulthood; it is necessary for the individual to be aware of the nature of others as well. Crimsworth consistently assesses the nature of new characters with whom he comes into contact. His commentary not only establishes the context of his working environment in *The Professor*, but it also lays the groundwork for his approach to dealing with his students. Crimsworth notes his impressions of his hometown acquaintance, Hunsden, after several encounters: “Mr. Hunsden’s eloquence was not, it will be perceived, of the smooth and oily order. As he spoke, he pleased me ill. I seem to recognize in him one of those characters who, sensitive enough themselves, are selfishly relentless towards the sensitiveness of others” (Brontë 33). Though Hunsden ultimately helps Crimsworth in finding a job in Belgium, Hunsden’s nature is largely intolerable for Crimsworth. Additionally, the introduction of students at Rue d’Isabelle allows Crimsworth to portray their nature according to their desires and abilities as young students. He describes Aurelia Koslow as “deplorably ignorant and ill-informed; incapable of writing or speaking correctly even German, her naïve tongue, a dunce in French, and her attempts at learning English a mere farce.” Adele Dronsart is “an unnatural looking being – so young, fresh, blooming, yet so Gorgon-like. . . She was shunned by her fellow-pupils, for bad as many of them were, few were as bad as she.” And Juanna Trista “was fierce and

hungry. . . [she] thought fit to trouble my first lessons with a coarse work-day sort of turbulence; she made noises with her mouth like a horse. She ejected her saliva, she uttered brutal expressions” (Brontë 79-81). These observations, though critical to an extreme degree, are indicative of Crimsworth’s awareness of the abilities of others.

More productively, Crimsworth’s awareness of the nature of others allows him to identify areas in which he can guide them both to strengthen their weaknesses and to capitalize on their strengths. For example, Crimsworth encourages Mademoiselle Francis Henri, a pupil and teacher at Rue d’Isabelle, to discover her personal nature in order to achieve her potential: “You may then take courage; cultivate the faculties that God and nature have bestowed on you, and do not fear in any crisis of suffering under any pressure of injustice, to derive free and full consolation from the consciousness of their strength and rarity” (Brontë 108). His initial encounters with Henri depict her as shy, unsure, and incompetent as a teacher. Crimsworth takes an active role in questioning and guiding Henri in her studies as both a pupil and a teacher, bringing her to a level of competency. He later comments, again employing the metaphor of the garden, “To speak truth, I watched this change much as a gardener watches the growth of a precious plant, and I contributed to it too, even as the said gardener contributes to the development of his favorite” (Brontë 118). Crimsworth takes pride in his role in the growth and development of Henri. Such enthusiasm enables him further to relate to his student, creating a flourishing teacher-student relationship. Crimsworth observes, “She liked to learn, but hated to teach; her progress as a pupil depended on herself, and I saw that on herself she could calculate with certainty” (Brontë 104). He also comments “As to the substance of your *devoir*, Mlle Henri, it has surprised me; I perused it with pleasure, because I saw in it some proofs of taste and fancy. Taste and fancy are not the highest gifts of the human mind. . . You may then take courage; cultivate the faculties that God

and nature have bestowed on you” (Brontë 108). Crimsworth identifies Henri’s strengths and encourages her to nurture them, in effect, promoting himself as a pedagogue, and her as an aspiring teacher.

Henri’s character shifts before the reader, thus dramatizing the personal growth that characterizes the process of education. Patricia Menon suggests that Henri’s development is evident in her ability to differ from, and also submit to Crimsworth (96).¹⁴ Henri, interestingly, proves to be aware of her personal nature when she explains her significant growth as an individual and teacher in *The Professor*. She thinks to herself, “I am glad [Crimsworth has] been forced to discover so much of my nature... Do you think I am myself a stranger to myself? What you tell me in terms so qualified, I have known fully from a child” (Brontë 108). Henri’s growth as a character solidifies Brontë’s position that an individual must be aware of his or her nature in order for the individual to experience intellectual growth, and her ability to reveal herself strategically to Crimsworth assures her professional success as well.

Similarly, Crimsworth’s deep awareness of himself and others gives him an intellectual advantage over others, such as his brother Edward and Monsieur Francois Pelet, that may otherwise inhibit his intellectual growth and social progress. For instance, as Edward’s clerk, Crimsworth is particular and exact. Regardless, Edward sends his first clerk, Tim, to spy on Crimsworth, hoping to find incriminating evidence that can be used to ridicule him. Edward is angered when nothing incriminating turns up and blasphemes Crimsworth anyway, who passively dismisses the sarcasms (Brontë 22). Crimsworth’s nature is precultivated as a character, as in, he is aware of the education he possesses and his rank in society and thus controls others’ perception of him accordingly. Similarly, Crimsworth resists manipulation by Pelet and Mademoiselle Reuter, who lead him to believe that she has a romantic interest in him

¹⁴ See Austen, *Eliot, Charlotte Brontë and the Mentor-Lover* (2003).

(Brontë 74-77). After overhearing a late-night conversation in the garden, Crimsworth discovers that Pelet is courting Reuter (Brontë 87-88). This information allows Crimsworth to guard himself against further misguidance and still maintain professional interactions with them.

Crimsworth's journey of self-awareness suggests that controlling the way others perceive him, and perceiving others accurately, is a key to success. John Kucich discusses the idea of repressed emotion in his landmark article "Passionate Reserve and Reserved Passion in the Works of Charlotte Brontë," claiming that "Brontë, the English novelist who first fully develops a logic of emotional reserve, destabilizes her characters in relation to struggles for power and in that way promises them a kind of psychic freedom not limited by its relation to 'tactical' pressures" (914). Brontë encourages the individual to acknowledge and strategically manage the pressures of the outside world as he or she acts according to his or her nature, driven by an awareness of self. Eagleton reads these episodes as a class allegory, arguing that Crimsworth's bourgeois genetics equip him with the ability to rebel against the oppressive tactics of his brother Edward and Pelet (35).¹⁵ Indeed, Crimsworth's self-cultivation and consequent ability to control his relations to others, render it virtually impossible for anyone to dominate him without disrupting the inequality of the relationship.

Brontë's concern with recognizing personal potential is also exemplified in her own biography. In her letters, she expresses her disdain for life as a governess, but recognizes her aptitude for teaching, reading, and writing. In one letter dated August 7, 1841, Brontë explains, "What dismays and haunts me sometimes is a conviction that I have no natural knack for my vocation – if teaching only – were requisite it would be smooth & easy – but it is the living in other people's houses. . . that is painful" (Brontë 33). Brontë was employed as a governess at the time and recognized that the duties of the situation, including its dependency on others,

¹⁵ See *Myths of Power* (1975).

contradicted her skill set as an instructor. Even the headmaster of the Pensionnat Heger, where Brontë spent a period of time before returning to a governess post in England, recognized Brontë's potential, asking her to work as an English teacher in his school—a journey that, had it happened, might have strongly resembled Mademoiselle Henri's.¹⁶ Instead, Brontë chose to teach through her novels.

III. Brontë's Critique of Victorian Pedagogy

The theory of education Brontë exposit in her first novel relies mainly on ideas she inherited from Rousseau and others, yet her application of those ideas offers a sustained and provocative exploration of their social implications. Nowhere is she more provocative than in the most direct critiques she offers of the Victorian educational system, including its main instructional and assessment methods. Crimsworth's instructional methods reflect those of the Victorian era: dictation and student response teaching.¹⁷ In his composition lesson, he “dictate[s] certain general questions, of which the pupils [are] to compose the answers from memory, access to books being forbidden” (Brontë 90). Crimsworth expresses disdain for the ineffectiveness of the “reading-lesson”—a time at which students read aloud, practicing their learned English accent and vocabulary: “It was such torture to the ear to listen to their uncouth mouthing of my native tongue, and no effort of example or precept on my part ever seemed to effect the slightest improvement in their accent” (Brontë 100). Crimsworth recognizes that simple correction does not teach and that examples are often not enough to guide students to proper pronunciation of a foreign language, yet he offers no viable alternatives either.

¹⁶ Moglen discusses Charlotte Brontë's romantic feelings for the headmaster of her school, Monsieur Heger. In spite of the widely documented debate that seeks to identify the exact relationship between Brontë and Heger, their professional relationship indicates that Heger recognized Brontë's ability as an instructor (62-64).

¹⁷ Student response teaching involves student memorization and recitation of material. Though the method is titled “student” response and gauges how well an individual remembers material, it fails to assess student comprehension and limits the educational experience by making the teacher the center of instruction.

Ultimately, in fact, the reading-lesson acts as an assessment rather than a form of instruction, yielding unsatisfactory results for the professor. Here, Brontë targets a highly debated aspect of Victorian (and modern) education: the assessment. In *Pedagogical Economies*, Cathy Shuman critiques the use of examination in Victorian literature, defining it as “an ordeal of questions and answers about acquired knowledge or skills, sanctioned by an institutional framework and resulting in some kind of assessment” (5). While Shuman’s analysis is literary, her use of the term “examination” offers a different perspective regarding whether or not the “institution” should govern the structure of the assessment, and ultimately, the curriculum. Examinations that merely mimic the values of the controlling institution do not have the potential to right social wrongs, or to help individuals to think for themselves. While Crimsworth does not identify an alternate method of instruction or assessment of foreign language, it is clear that Brontë recognizes the ineffectiveness of a teacher-centered approach, in part because it works against the very goal she believes education should achieve—self-awareness, not rote memorization, and exploration of the world, not simple regurgitation.

The evolution of Crimsworth as a professor offers insight into Brontë’s perspective as an unproclaimed educational theorist. *The Professor* identifies and critiques pedagogical characteristics specific to the Victorian era, while offering a call for self-help and cultivation, and emphasizing the need to nurture. As William Crimsworth evolves from tradesman to professor, Charlotte Brontë outlines her teaching ideology in her fiction. For Brontë, *The Professor* plants the seed that will grow into a fully formed statement of educational philosophy.

Chapter Three:

Jane Eyre and her Pupil: The Governess and the Garden

In contrast to *The Professor*, Brontë takes a different and more developed approach in presenting her educational philosophy in *Jane Eyre*. While Professor William Crimsworth's teacher-centered instructional approach embodies the educational philosophy of Victorian society, governess Jane Eyre focuses on instructional methods that promote the student as the center of the classroom. As with *The Professor*, Rousseauian principles are demonstrated in *Jane Eyre*; however, Brontë advances her educational philosophy by mirroring yet another theorist: Friedrich Froebel. Brontë uses the institution of Lowood School to reflect the educational ideology of her era while using the relationship between Jane Eyre and her charge, Adèle, to demonstrate an alternative: a student-centered learning environment that promotes self-activity and imagination. In *Jane Eyre*, Brontë articulates the necessity of imagination in discovery as a means to cultivate a child to his or her maximum potential.

Brontë's pedagogical methods that are reflected in *Jane Eyre* parallel the theories set forth by Friedrich Froebel. Froebel grew up motherless with little formal education and worked as a forester. Like Reverend Brontë, he was influenced by the theories of Rousseau, aiming to encourage growth of the child's mind in pleasant surroundings and self-motivated activity. Froebel's exploration of education was influenced not only by the theories set forth by Rousseau, but also by a fellow pedagogue, Johann Friedrich Pestalozzi. Froebel agreed with Pestalozzi that natural education was the most beneficial for children, but argued that they should begin attending kindergarten by seven years of age to promote learning through interaction with other children. It is significant that Froebel encouraged the concept of kindergarten, as it took the place of the otherwise "natural education" a child would have received at home.

In addition to encouraging attendance at kindergarten, Friedrich Froebel discusses the act of “play” among children in his seminal work *Education of Man* (1826), explaining, “they are either the imitations of life and of the phenomena of actual life; or they are the freely-active applications of what has been learned; or they are the completely spontaneous, symbols and representations of the spirit” (Froebel 303). Froebel identifies imagination in terms of play, articulating a practical interpretation of how children develop to understand their environment. Play is imitation, application, or something in between—a reflection of the perceived world. For Brontë, Rousseau informs the definition of imagination which “enlarges the bounds of possibility for us, whether for good or ill, and therefore stimulates and feeds desires by the hope of satisfying them” (44). Hence, children achieve an understanding of their environment through play which provides the opportunity to explore and discover the real and the fantastical.

It is not likely that Froebel and Brontë, the Reverend or Charlotte, directly crossed paths, though they were active at the same time. However, Brontë uses *Jane Eyre* to explore the same educational philosophy in writing that Froebel did in the classroom. Through play and imagination, students in both Jane Eyre’s and Froebel’s classrooms learn to attain independence. Yet Brontë’s students do not simply achieve instructional outcomes—they overcome the lack of natural education that Froebel stresses as important in development. It is interesting to note that Rousseau, Froebel, and Brontë were all left motherless at a young age. In effect, each of these theorists use education to their advantage, compensating for lost family. Brontë thus characterizes Jane Eyre as a governess to fill that same void for the motherless Adèle, and sets up education not just as a way of attaining success in life, but as an alternative means to gaining a family.

I. Young Jane: From Gateshead to Lowood

Jane learns to self-cultivate early in life, fostering an ability to use reading and language to her advantage. For example, when Jane's guardian and aunt, Mrs. Reed, sends Jane away from a family gathering because of her disobedient attitude, Jane retreats to the drawing-room, selects *Bewick's History of British Birds* from the bookshelf, and finds herself "shrined in double retirement" as she reads (Brontë 12). Jane finds sanctuary in reading in spite of Mrs. Reed's hostility. Jane's reading is "an act of individualistic and imaginative rebellion against the confining circumstances of her life," (695) according to Mark Hennelly, who argues that an individual's attitude toward books is indicative of his or her personality. Reading to educate oneself enables the individual to use language as a means of protection. And as Jane robes herself with the scarlet curtain, she defends herself against her physically and verbally abusive cousin, John Reed: "Wicked and cruel boy! . . . You are like a murderer – you are like a slave-driver – you are like the Roman emperors! I had read Goldsmith's *History of Rome*, and had formed my opinion of Nero, Caligula, &c" (Brontë 15). Reading is more than an escape for Jane; it fosters the type of self-sufficiency that enables a young individual to defend herself against a sometimes harsh environment. Moreover, Jane's self-defense is a result of using her imagination to synthesize historical context with modern circumstance, yielding an ability to identify and assess reality. Young Jane, like Crimsworth, reads her environment much like she reads books, discovering and cultivating her personal nature in order to achieve independence.

Mrs. Reed, however, does not accept Jane's defense against "Master Reed," and ultimately determines that Jane's disobedience is extraordinary, sending her to Lowood School with headmaster Brocklehurst. The initial meeting between Jane and Brocklehurst reveals the core of the flawed educational philosophy that drives his institution: while he believes that children require cultivation to become worthy members of society, they are to deny nature and

conform to a systematic routine in order to achieve it. Brocklehurst expresses to Mrs. Reed, “[Jane] shall be placed in that nursery of chosen plants; and I trust she will show herself grateful to the inestimable privilege of her election” (Brontë 43). Ultimately, Lowood School is intended to shape and refine children—similar to the pruning and harvesting of plants; however, the nurturing that is required to reap the benefits of a well-raised plant is not an integral factor in Brocklehurst’s philosophy, and instead of flourishing, the students perish.

Brocklehurst’s educational philosophy at Lowood School reflects traditional Victorian class structures: paupers do not need an elaborate education because they will not use it. Poor Victorian children were educated in matters of the Bible instead. Brocklehurst characterizes his educational system, explaining, “My plan in bringing up these girls is, not to accustom them to habits of luxury and indulgence, but to render them hardy, patient, self-denying” (Brontë 76). Such rhetoric reinforces the standards of the Victorian class system in which the working class was conditioned to be servile and oppressed while the upper class maintained aristocracy and special rights. Like Brocklehurst, Froebel desires for the individual to set himself aside in order to draw closer to God; however, in opposition to the monomaniacal disciplinarian Brocklehurst, Froebel sees several goals of education: “Education is to guide man to clearness about himself and in himself, to peace with Nature, and to union with God” (Froebel 3). Froebel’s methods, like Jane Eyre’s, work toward “peace with Nature”; Brocklehurst’s—though an admittedly extreme example—reveal that traditional Victorian pedagogy constitutes a denial of nature in all its senses.

For example, the shape of Lowood school-rooms inhibits the natural ways students learn, at least according to Froebel’s designation of what a productive school-room should resemble. Jane describes Lowood’s school-room as “long,” (Brontë 54), and “[r]anged on benches down

the sides of the room, the eighty girls sat motionless and erect” (Brontë 57). Though Lowood’s classroom design is indicative of a cooperative learning arrangement, a setting that allows groups of several students to face each other and interact, little cooperative learning takes place as the students are segregated by intellectual level, and hardly engaging at all, much less learning cooperatively. In contrast, Froebel indicates that kindergarten classrooms should designate areas for independent and communal engagement (Brosterman 31). Early kindergarten classrooms are often depicted with “horseshoe” shaped desk arrangements that optimize student interaction with each other and the teacher, as well as create a boundary between the communal center of the classroom and the outer perimeter, intended for independent exploration. Because the tables in Lowood’s school-room are arranged along the perimeter of the room, limited space is available for individual discovery.

Just as the typical classroom design at Lowood School inhibits the students’ ability to interact on a variety of levels, so also does the teacher-centered approach to instruction at Lowood illustrate other errors common in Victorian education. The resident students of Lowood School attend “lessons” for eight hours a day with a brief break to play in the garden. Student repetition and recitation are the primary modes of learning, placing the teacher at the center of the lesson and disabling the student from interacting with the lesson material in an effort to understand it. For example, Miss Scatcherd checks for comprehension by asking questions only after having students read through a chapter on Charles I twice. Negative reinforcement is the primary means of motivation at Lowood School. When Helen Burns consistently answers Miss Scatcherd’s questions correctly, Helen is scolded for dirty finger nails, rather than praised for unexpected aptitude. Upon mispronouncing a word, Helen is demoted to the bottom of the class (Brontë 65). Such classroom procedure humiliates the individual, rather than encourages her

learning.

The central pedagogical error of Lowood, as depicted in the novel, is that it suppresses students' imagination, a concept explored in depth by eighteenth-century poets, literary critics, and friends, William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. For Brontë, the imagination of a student leads him or her to new ideas, perceptions, and understanding, and instruction that encourages discovery of concepts requires the employment of imagination in a Romantic sense. In the 1815 Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), Wordsworth articulates his understanding of imagination as “denoting operations of the mind upon those objects, and processes of creation or of composition, governed by certain fixed laws” (566). Our mind functions to synthesize our previous experiences to interpret the present and future. In *Biographia Literaria* (1817), Coleridge agrees with Wordsworth that the imagination “dissolves, diffuses, [and] dissipates, in order to recreate,” but emphasizes the connection between the imagination and the divine, suggesting that the employment of imagination is an individual's quest to identify “the living Power” as a means to achieve perfection, as well as a vital aspect of existence (585-86). The act of synthesis in imagination encourages discovery because imagination allows us to test and push the boundaries of what we identify as reality. As Brontë points out, reality can be understood through imagination, allowing as learners to see the garden and its metaphor in the context of our progress.

A few horrific scenes in *Jane Eyre* demonstrate the necessity of imagination in discovery—and the consequences of its absence at Lowood. The first centers around Jane's relationship with Helen Burns, arguably the most gifted pupil at Lowood. During instruction, Helen's mind often wanders off into a “dream,” or imaginative realm that is more interesting than the routine school lesson. Yet, when learning about Charles I, Helen is quick to answer

questions. Jane thus questions why Miss Scatcherd continually punishes Helen, to which Helen replies, “I have no method; and sometimes I say, like you, I cannot *bear* to be subjected to systematic arrangements” (Brontë 68). Helen describes her greatest strength as a weakness, and accepts the pedagogical system that would stunt her growth as an individual.

Despite this, Helen’s imagination is developed enough that she finds ways to resist the deadening Lowood system—ways that Jane has not yet learned. The first time Jane speaks to Helen Burns, Jane finds Helen reading a book and confesses, “I hardly know where I found the hardihood thus to open a conversation with a stranger; the step was contrary to my nature and habits: but I think her occupation touched a chord of sympathy somewhere; for I too liked reading.” Helen shares the book, but reading does not spark enjoyment for Jane: “a brief examination convinced me that the contents were less taking than the title. *Rasselas* looked dull to my trifling taste. I saw nothing about fairies, nothing about genii; no bright variety seemed to spread over the closely printed pages” (Brontë 60). Jane indicates her desire to read fantastical content that captures her interest, providing a means to escape the reality of Lowood—yet what Jane does not know is that she needs more to learn to imagine as Helen does, rather than to escape.

Because of Helen, Jane’s imagination develops in spite of Lowood, underscoring Brontë’s use of Wordsworthian and Coleridgean theory—and the necessity of imagination in discovery. One day, during a visit, Brocklehurst calls attention to Jane, accusing her of being a liar. Brocklehurst forces Jane to stand on a stool in front of her peers. Jane notes, “I was now exposed in general view on a pedestal of infamy.” Now on display, Jane is burdened with embarrassment, until Helen walks by, looks up, and smiles at Jane. She recalls, “What a smile! I remember it now, and I know it was the effluence of fine intellect, of true courage” (Brontë 81).

Helen's act of kindness revitalizes Jane. She recognizes the brawn associated with enduring Brocklehurst's demoralizing character—much like her relationships at Gateshead—which lends to her the ability to withstand the oppressive nature of Lowood. As a result, Jane is encouraged to reconceptualize and reimagine her surrounding environment and embrace Lowood's rejection of her.

Like Jane, Helen is resistant to Lowood, but unlike Jane, Helen's resistance is too strong for Lowood; ultimately, Helen's strong sense of imagination is her journey to discovering life. Eventually, Helen becomes very ill, and she is quarantined in Miss Temple's bedroom. Jane visits her one evening, and Helen explains that she is going to Heaven, or her "long home – [her] last home." Jane questions Helen's confidence in her prediction:

'But where are you going to, Helen? Can you see? Do you know?'

'I believe; I have faith; I am going to God.'

'Where is God? What is God?'

'My Maker and yours; who will never destroy what He created. I rely implicitly on His power, and confide wholly in His goodness: I count the hours till that eventful one arrives which shall restore me to Him, reveal Him to me.'

'You are sure, then, Helen, that there is such a place as heaven, and that our souls can get to it when we die?'

'I am sure there is a future state; I believe God is good; I can resign my immortal part to Him without any misgiving. God is my father; God is my friend: I love Him; I believe He loves me.' (Brontë 97)

Helen believes she will achieve perfection when she is united with her heavenly father who will amplify, rather than subdue her imagination. As Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar point out in

Madwoman in the Attic, Helen “dreams of freedom in eternity” as means to escape the Lowood trap (346). Her association with living after death parallels Coleridge’s point that perfection is earned with the discovery of God; the individual has not fully lived until he or she has died. Thus, Helen is not living as a student at Lowood, and in order for her to live, she must be expelled. The death of Helen’s character is pivotal in the plot of *Jane Eyre*, but ultimately reconciles imagination and life for Jane.

Like Helen, Miss Temple yearns to achieve freedom beyond Lowood, but while Helen’s escape from Lowood is in the form of death, Miss Temple’s escape is marriage. Following Helen’s death, Jane and Miss Temple form a strong bond and she proves to be a role-model for Jane: “to [Miss Temple’s] instruction I owed the best part of my acquirements; her friendship and society had been my continual solace; she had stood me in the stead of mother, governess, and, latterly, companion.” Jane continues, “but destiny, in the shape of the Rev. Mr. Nasmyth, came between me and Miss Temple” (Brontë 100). In Helen’s absence, Miss Temple becomes Jane’s family, but Miss Temple desires to develop a family beyond Lowood, earning freedom on her own merit.

Miss Temple’s desire to escape Lowood School—and its oppressive educational philosophy — does not diminish her effectiveness as a teacher; Miss Temple fosters a safe learning environment in spite of Lowood’s strict boundaries. One evening after classes, Miss Temple invites Jane and Helen to her bedroom for tea. Jane describes the visit and Helen’s response to Miss Temple, noting, “The refreshing meal, the brilliant fire, the presence and kindness of her beloved instructress, or, perhaps, more than all these, something in her own unique mind, had roused her powers within her” (Brontë 87). For both Jane and Helen, Miss Temple proves to be patient and kind, yet practical and inquisitive. In the inviting atmosphere

Miss Temple provides for her students, Helen is encouraged to think creatively and speak boldly, reading in Latin a page of Virgil (Brontë 88). To this point, Jane was unaware of Helen's aptitude for language, but there had not yet been a suitable environment for Helen to reveal to Jane this skill either. Miss Temple effectively establishes safe boundaries in which to explore knowledge, unlike those of Lowood. For Brontë, Miss Temple is the teacher that Lowood needs, but is unable to keep.

Despite Helen's and Miss Temple's testament, including the demise of Helen and the exodus of Miss Temple, the overwhelming tendency of Lowood is to diminish imagination. This is nowhere more evident than in what ought to be the school's most imaginative space: the garden. Like the Lowood school-room in which the intellectual growth of students is stunted, the Lowood garden is also emblematic of how the institution's ideology suppresses the imagination of its students. Following morning lessons, Miss Temple dismisses the students to the garden. Jane describes the dismal schoolyard with disappointment:

The garden was a wide inclosure, surrounded with walls so high as to exclude every glimpse of prospect; a covered verandah ran down one side, and broad walks bordered a middle space divided into scores of little beds: these beds were assigned as gardens for the pupils to cultivate, and each bed had an owner. When full of flowers they would doubtless look pretty; but now, at the latter end of January, all was wintry blight and brown decay. (Brontë 59)

Time in the garden means a break from lessons for Jane and her peers, yet the high walls that shield the students' view of the outside world instead trap them in a space that is reminiscent of a prison.

Lowood's garden, an extension of the institution, hinders Jane's ability to exercise her

imagination. Shivering from the cold and isolated from the other students, she tries to recall the home she left just two days prior: “Gateshead and my past life seemed floated away to an immeasurable distance; the present was vague and strange, and of the future I could form no conjecture. I looked round the convent-like garden” (Brontë 59-60). Unable to recollect the memory of her abusive home with her cousins and Mrs. Reed, Jane takes in the scene around her and realizes she is still trapped, unable to conjure any existence beyond the reality in front of her. Lowood’s garden inhibits the synthesis of experiences for Jane—as in, her past and present—a phenomenon that Wordsworth’s and Coleridge’s theories on imagination point out as necessary to understand the surrounding environment and accompanying circumstances.

In time, Jane is afforded an escape as she is given the opportunity to roam beyond the boundaries of Lowood’s prison-like garden. Spring arrives, but many of Jane’s peers have fallen ill to typhus. Lowood begins deteriorating from the inside out because it has suppressed and deprived its students so severely that little to no life remains among them or within the institution. Even Brocklehurst does not visit anymore. Jane and other students who are well are dismissed from their studies and are free to travel beyond the school’s perimeters. Lowood’s staff is consumed with taking care of the sick and the once rigid pedagogical structure is now absent. The garden, ironically, is flourishing (Brontë 90-92). Brontë constructs Jane’s opportunity to roam and explore the now green and blossoming gardens to demonstrate the individual’s need for exploration. The encouragement of such freedom and opportunity, as touted by Froebel, enables an individual to understand his or her environment. A bountiful garden is symbolic of growth; for young Jane, it is a move beyond oppression.

After illness and disease passes from Lowood, the teachers return to their posts and the students to their lessons; though young Jane’s escape is temporary, Lowood’s educational

structure improves—only after Brocklehurst is demoted. Following Helen’s death and Miss Temple’s marriage, Jane begins to daydream about the opportunity beyond the horizon, past the skirts of Lowood. She recognizes that she, too, must find a permanent escape from the “prison-ground” and beyond the “exile limits” (Brontë 101) that will enable individual growth and imaginative power.

II. Jane as a Governess: Discovering Thornfield

While Lowood School represents teaching ideology contrary to Brontë’s beliefs about what makes for effective pedagogy, the positive relationship fostered between Jane Eyre and her pupil is emblematic of Brontë’s educational theory. Jane empowers herself to take responsibility for Adèle’s well-being, resting on Rousseau’s principle that the appropriate education of a child will allow him or her to engage successfully with society. Jane Eyre fills the void of natural education in Adèle’s life by providing a student-centered learning environment as opposed to the traditional student response method that was utilized in nineteenth-century Victorian education—that which Brontë illustrates in Jane’s time at Lowood School. Jane recognizes that restricting the active Adèle from interacting with her surroundings would inhibit her learning progress, yet also acknowledges the necessity to continue motivating Adèle. Adèle is thus encouraged to explore her environment in order to promote developmental progress.

Rather than replicating the errors of the Lowood method, Jane’s approach to instructing Adèle aligns with Froebel’s philosophy of education. Upon meeting Adèle, Jane articulates the nature of children and the roles that are the greatest significance in their lives:

This . . . will be thought cool language by persons who entertain solemn doctrines about the angelic nature of children, and the duty of those charged with their education to conceive for them an idolatrous devotion; but I am not writing to

flatter parental egotism, to echo cant, or prop up humbug; I am merely telling the truth. I felt a conscientious solitude for Adèle's welfare and progress, and a quiet liking to her little self. (Brontë 129)

Jane not only respects the parent-child relationship, but experiences a connection that empowers her to take responsibility for Adèle's well-being in the absence of Adèle's own mother. This was a necessary step in the satisfactory development of children according to Froebel. In *Friedrich Froebel and English Education*, Nathan Isaacs notes, "Froebel holds that he can show from the beginning the child's need for a sense of communion and oneness with those around him. He is a member of a family and seeks the feeling of family unison-unison with his mother, with his father, with his brothers and sisters" (193). As Brontë emphasizes a united relationship between Jane and Adèle, the family unit is established, satisfying the child's need for the sense of communion that Froebel calls for.

Jane Eyre fills the void of natural education in Adèle's life by providing a student centered learning environment. Upon the first interaction between Jane and Adèle as teacher-student, Jane describes her approach to educating Adèle: "I found my pupil sufficiently docile, though disinclined to apply; she had not been used to regular occupation of any kind. I felt it would be injudicious to confine her too much at first" (Brontë 123). Froebel's theory of education consists of similar principles. In *Froebel and Education by Self-Activity*, Herbert Courthope Bowen discusses Froebel's ideology, noting that "life and growth appeared to be a progressive development from lower to higher grades of being... and that exercise of function produced development, while loss of exercise checked or destroyed it" (91). For Jane and Adèle, initial instruction starts off slowly, though it is steadily maintained until Jane determines the level at which Adèle is ready for more rigorous lessons. While Jane may have been more

inclined to begin at a faster pace, she modifies instruction so that it suits Adèle instead.

Like Froebel, Jane Eyre approaches the education of her student by promoting activity. She encourages Adèle to dance, sing, and recite poetry. Jane comments, “She had finished her breakfast, so I permitted her to give a specimen of her accomplishments... she commenced singing a song from some opera” (Brontë 121). Such encouragement of self-expression reflects Froebel’s emphasis of self-motivated activity. Isaacs discusses Froebel’s philosophy of education: “[a child] will continually and actively *seek growth*. He will do so by the successive deployment and exercise and enjoyment of his every power, in the great growth-enacting and growth-promoting cycle of activities which we call his play” (191). Activity in this form refines existing student abilities and fosters the desire to develop new ones, much like the imaginative process.

In *Jane Eyre*, Brontë embraces the Froebelian principle that while self-activity is essential, it must stimulate progress. Bowen presents Froebel’s analysis of the development of children by stating that the innate strengths of a child, whatever they may be, can only be strengthened by developing instruction accordingly (92). Jane recognizes the need to modify instruction according to Adèle’s strengths and weaknesses. As her teacher, Jane ensures that she will influence Adèle to become agreeable in spite of her personality and behavior: “My pupil was a lively child, who had been spoiled and indulged, and, therefore, was sometimes wayward; but as she was committed entirely into my care, and no injudicious interference from any quarter ever thwarted my plans for her improvement, she soon forgot her little freaks, and became obedient and teachable” (Brontë 209). According to Jane, Adèle makes satisfactory progress. Such progress is the result of a well-implemented pedagogical approach.

The responsibility that Jane feels for Adèle leads to her success as a student. Rochester

enrolls Adèle in a school in Ireland, far from the comfort of Thornfield and educational structure that Jane provided as Adèle's governess. After Rochester and Jane marry, Jane visits Adèle in school: "She looked pale and thin; she said she was not happy. I found the rules of the establishment were too strict, its course of study too severe, for a child of her age; I took her home with me" (Brontë 521). Ultimately, Jane's responsibility as a wife to Rochester inhibits her from acting as Adèle's governess and providing what Brontë, or Jane, would characterize as an appropriate education—yet it does permit her to act in the place of a mother, and to assure that Adèle's education proceeds in a way that cultivates her natural gifts. Jane enrolls Adèle in a school closer to Thornfield with a more "indulgent" curriculum, paying special attention to Adèle's needs and comfort. Jane observes that this new system allows Adèle to make "fair progress in her studies" (Brontë 522). Though specific details regarding this curriculum are limited, Adèle's development as a young lady pleases Jane, leaving her with little commentary on Adèle's Irish education.

Brontë's support for student-centered educational learning is further illuminated in Jane's position as a mistress for the Morton charity school, organized by her friend and cousin, St. John. Similar to Crimsworth at the Rue d'Isabelle, Jane is acutely aware of the nature of her students. After some time of teaching them, Jane expresses, "I could comprehend my scholars and their nature. Wholly untaught, with faculties quite torpid, they seemed to me hopelessly dull; and, at first sight, all dull alike: but I soon found I was mistaken. There was a difference amongst them as amongst the educated; and when I got to know them, and they me, this difference rapidly developed itself" (Brontë 424). Jane finds satisfaction in discovering the nature of her students while her students find satisfaction in discovering Jane as a teacher. In Jane's classroom, discovery in learning is reciprocated between the teacher and the students. For Brontë, maximum

learning is achieved when the teacher becomes a learner with the students, thus reinforcing a student-centered learning environment.

For both Adèle and the charity school students, Jane is aware of the need for imagination in fostering growth, demonstrated by her encouragement of her students to engage with subjects beyond their abilities. While at Morton school, Jane comments, “I had amongst my scholars several farmers’ daughters. . . These could already read, write, and sew; and to them I taught the elements of grammar, geography, history, and the finer kinds of needlework. I found estimable characters amongst them—characters desirous of information and disposed for improvement” (Brontë 424). Jane’s plan to develop her students as learners echoes Rousseau who claims that “[t]rue happiness consists in decreasing the difference between our desires and our powers” (44). Jane recognizes growth as a necessity to achieve escape from the bondage of ignorance. As she identifies the capabilities of her students, she creates what Froebel would consider a comprehensive curriculum:

A universal and comprehensive plan must, therefore, necessarily consider at an early period singing, drawing, painting, and modeling; it will not leave them to an arbitrary, frivolous whimsicalness, but treat them as serious objects of the school. Its intention will not be to make each pupil an artist in some one or all of the arts, but to secure to each human being full and all-sided development. (Froebel 228)

As Jane assesses student ability and progress, she takes deliberate steps to improve her students as individuals. Through Jane, Brontë demonstrates how individual maturation is developed and, therefore, stimulates the desire to not only engage with the surrounding environment, but also to know it. Yet, comprehending knowledge requires higher-level thinking—a synthesis of old and new experiences—a point that Wordsworth and Coleridge emphasize as key to discovery.

III. Jane: The Non-Traditional Student

Though Rochester and St. John are love interests for Jane, her relationship with each of them resembles that of a teacher-centered environment, with Jane as the pupil. The self-centered Rochester speaks with a derogatory tone toward Jane, ordering her to fulfill his requests without justification. One evening, Rochester questions Jane's ability to play the piano. He orders her to play for him, but after a few minutes of Jane's demonstration he tells her to stop and says, "You play a *little*, I see; like any other English school-girl; perhaps rather better than some, but not well" (Brontë 148). Not only does Rochester negatively reinforce Jane's obedience, but his direction inhibits her ability to choose according to her will. Jane observes that "Mr. Rochester had such a direct way of giving orders, it seems a matter of course to obey him promptly" (Brontë 156). Likewise, St. John's countenance toward Jane inhibits her freedom of choice. When he decides to teach her Hindostanee, the language of the people where he will be on missions, he is patient, but oppressive:

I found him a very patient, very forbearing, and yet an exacting master: he expected me to do a great deal; and when I fulfilled his expectations, he, in his own way, fully testified his approbation. By degrees, he acquired a certain influence over me that took away my liberty of mind: his praise and notice were more restraining than his indifference. I could no longer talk or laugh freely when he was by, because a tiresomely importunate instinct reminded me that vivacity (at least in me) was distasteful to him. . . . But I did not love my servitude: I wished, many a time, he had continued to neglect me. (Brontë 461)

St. John's overbearing character alienates Jane. She is unable to act naturally around him and she loses interest in learning from him. Though an adult, Jane still desires to please her teachers,

finding it challenging to do for Rochester and St. John.

In particular, St. John and Jane's teacher-pupil relationship poses a problem for their familial relationship. When St. John Eyre Rivers discovers that he and Jane are cousins, he distances himself from her. Such emotional detachment hurts Jane who states, "I felt the distance between us to be far greater than when he had known me only as the village schoolmistress" (Brontë 458). Jane did not know at the time that he chose not to treat her like a sister because he intended to make her his wife. But his marriage proposal to Jane is not out of love as much as it is out of necessity. As her mentor, he takes great pains to teach her language, but as a potential bride-groom, he is unable to relinquish the role of a self-centered teacher and thus defines for Jane her role and destiny as a wife: "God and nature intended you for a missionary's wife. It is not personal, but mental endowments they have given you: you are formed for labour, not for love. A missionary's wife you must—shall be. You shall be mine: I claim you—not for my pleasure, but for my Sovereign's service" (Brontë 466). While St. John clearly details that Jane's acceptance of his proposal would be an act of obedience to God, he fails to articulate his promise as a husband to her. Like his teaching, St. John's marriage proposal sets expectations for Jane to achieve, elevating himself to chief on the subject and diminishing her to student. Jane, in effect, refuses his proposal. Menon critiques Jane's interactions with Rochester and St. John, equating them to a mentor-mentee relationship in which a power struggle of intellectualism and morality exists. Menon argues that because St. John has moral supremacy over Jane, she is unable to marry him because it would yield a life of subservience to him (104-05). More impressive than potential subservience is St. John's subjugation of Jane; their relationship would not constitute a fitting union or healthy family because their love for each other is borne out of a hierarchy rather than a reciprocated friendship.

Jane's focus on St. John is limited, though, as she continues to muse about her past with Rochester. Unlike her reverence toward St. John, Jane delights in Rochester as her "master," seeing him as a true love interest who desires her shared companionship. The garden at Thornfield, which serves as the scene of much of Jane's education, is a rich, flourishing space—a visual illustration of the quality of learning that Jane is achieving. However, the garden is also a place of compromise for Jane and Rochester. Here, Rochester declares his love for Jane, but not without undergoing her scrutiny and earning her trust. Brontë, following a pattern she inaugurated in *The Professor*, draws a comparison to Eden:

I went apart into the orchard. No nook in the grounds more sheltered and more Eden-like; it was full of trees, it bloomed with flowers: a very high wall shut it out from the court, on one side; on the other, a beech avenue screened it from the lawn. At the bottom was a sunk fence; its sole separation from lonely fields: a winding walk, bordered with laurels and terminating in a giant horse-chestnut, circled at the base by a seat, led down to the fence. Here one could wander unseen. While such honey-dew fell, such silence reigned, such gloaming gathered, I felt as if I could haunt such shade forever[.] (Brontë 290-91)

In the biblical account of Eden, Adam and Eve hide from God because they are aware and ashamed of their nakedness (Genesis 3:8). Similarly, Jane hides from Rochester to avoid him after finding out he plans to marry Blanche Ingram. In both cases, the discovery of new knowledge is burdensome and leads to actions that demonstrate guilt. Jane is not prepared to confront Rochester, having to suppress her hurt feelings and infatuation with him. However, where Adam and Eve disobey God and violate His trust, Jane and Rochester form a new bond of trust: that which forms a marriage, the ultimate compromise, and a new family.

Rochester's ability to help Jane reconceptualize his and Blanche Ingram's relationship indicates, for Brontë, the necessity of imagination in understanding circumstance. Jane interprets Rochester's relationship with Blanche Ingram as romantic, but learns later that Rochester had no love interest in Blanche. Wordsworth points out that "[t]hese processes of imagination are carried on either by conferring additional properties upon an object, or abstracting from it some of those which it actually possesses, and thus enabling it to react upon the mind which hath performed the process, like a new existence" (567). As imagination interprets perception and its many parts, it also reorganizes the understood experience that is gained from original perception, in this case, Jane's original understanding of a false engagement. For Jane, a new whole is formed – not only in perception, but also in matrimony.

Jane Eyre is many things – a love story, a bildungsroman, an autobiography – but it is underrepresented as a record for Brontë's educational philosophy. Though she did not enjoy life as a governess, it nevertheless crept into her literature as a means to explain, among many things, her views on cultivating the individual. Victorian pedagogy is epitomized in Lowood School, but Brontë redeems it by allowing Jane and Adèle to establish a strong teacher-pupil relationship. And while the bare gardens at Lowood stunt the student's imagination, the Thornfield garden is bountiful and yields new love. The garden continues to steer Brontë as she works to uncover the many roles it plays, cultivating her in life and cultivating her characters.

Chapter Four:

The Cultivation of Lucy Snowe

In *Villette*, Brontë's focus shifts from the private governess of *Jane Eyre* to the entrepreneurial school teacher, Lucy Snowe, allowing Brontë a broader application for her pedagogical theories. In *Jane Eyre*, Brontë points out that maximum learning is yielded when the teacher identifies himself or herself as a learner with the students, thus making the learning environment truly student-centered. *Villette* epitomizes this point as Lucy is cultivated from a novice teacher, learning from the examples of Madame Beck and Monsieur Paul Emanuel, as well as from first-hand experience in the classroom. Brontë embraces and expands Froebel's idea that while the schoolroom is a place for learning, supplementary gardens provide areas for further exploration and discovery, and ultimately, self-cultivation. Yet, for Brontë, learning environments are subject to surveillance, which breeds resistance and the individual's need to cultivate an inner life that provides both privacy and escape.

I. Young Lucy: Nursery Governess to Nurse

While Brontë continues to explore the garden to increase her understanding of the cultivation of the individual, the character of Lucy Snowe transitions from a nursery-governess to an entrepreneurial school teacher. Similar to William Crimsworth in *The Professor*, Lucy Snowe is aware of her nature. But where Crimsworth is wholly formed as a character from the outset, Lucy develops an understanding of herself through the course of the novel. As she does so, her understanding of others also takes shape.

Lucy cultivates her own personal identity, beginning her journey when she is fourteen. She lives with her godmother, Mrs. Bretton, and her godmother's son, Graham—who we know later as Dr. John—in the town of Bretton. Lucy does not reveal whether or not she has any

family beyond Mrs. Bretton and Graham, and instead centers her development on her family life and relationships with these distant relatives. Eventually, six year-old Paulina, or Polly, comes to live with them because her father, Mr. Home, is out of the country. Paulina is not open to befriending Lucy right away, so Lucy is left to observe Paulina in an effort to learn about her. Lucy describes Paulina as having “an old-fashioned calm most unchildlike” (Brontë 11) and notes, “When I say child I use an inappropriate and undescriptive term—a term suggesting any picture rather than that of the demure little person in a mourning frock and white chemisette, that might just have fitted a good-sized doll . . . but still silent, diligent, absorbed, womanly” (Brontë 17). For Lucy, Paulina’s age is not an accurate depiction of her person, and though Paulina is only six years old, Lucy suggests that Paulina is older in wisdom and stature. In the article “Haunted Childhood in Charlotte Brontë’s *Villette*,” Lucy Armitt argues that in *Villette*, childhood is a means to discover one’s identity; therefore, Lucy’s understanding of Paulina’s childish ways is Lucy’s attempt to fill the void of identity in her life as an abandoned child (217). Lucy, a few years older than Paulina, recognizes that she is not a child, but not yet a woman either. The variation in Lucy’s description of Paulina indicates there is more than just a void of identity that exists for Lucy and needs filling—she desires to discover who she is through other’s inconsistencies.

As Lucy seeks to discover her personal identity, she observes a teacher-pupil relationship between Mrs. Bretton’s son, Graham, and Paulina. Brontë uses this mentor-like relationship to replace the lack of family in Paulina’s life, serving as the natural cultivation that—similar to Rousseau and Froebel—Brontë calls for. As with Jane who fills the void of maternity for Adele, Graham fills the paternal role for Paulina in the absence of her nomadic father. Graham makes Paulina the center of his attention when they are together, providing consistency in her young

life. As a result, Paulina expresses to Lucy that she likes Graham best on Sundays: “then we have him the whole day, and he is quiet, and, in the evening, *so kind*” (Brontë 28). Lucy also observes that Paulina is an able learner when around Graham, stating, “She was quick in learning, apt in imitating; and, besides, her pleasure was to please Graham: she proved a ready scholar” (Brontë 29). Because of the special attention Graham gives Paulina, she desires to do well at the tasks he sets before her in order to satisfy him.

While others conform to Paulina’s wishes, Graham embraces his role as her mentor and calls her to move beyond what she knows, challenging her to interact with different environments. For instance, Paulina lies on the floor and refuses the Brettons’ cook’s urgings to get up: “She was allowed to lie, therefore, till she chose to rise of her own accord” (Brontë 27). But Graham gives Paulina a book that “tells about distant countries, a long, long way from England” (Brontë 30). Paulina is impressed with the different culture, clothing, and weather displayed by pictures in the book and expresses to Lucy, “I may travel with Graham. We intend going to Switzerland” (Brontë 31). The once complacent Paulina who refused to leave her father’s knee now desires to travel internationally because of Graham’s encouragement. Here, Brontë exemplifies the growth that occurs by merely making an individual aware of environments beyond the familiar.

Though Graham and Paulina develop a teacher-pupil relationship, Paulina ultimately seeks Lucy, the teacher-to-be, for guidance. Upon finding out that her father has found a new home and wants her to come live with him, Paulina neglects Graham and confides in Lucy. Lucy suggests to Paulina that she should talk with Mrs. Bretton, but then concedes that “[Paulina] never showed my godmother one glimpse of her inner self” (Brontë 32). When Paulina refuses Lucy’s suggestion, Lucy attempts to guide Paulina to an understanding of her relationship with

Graham: “he is sixteen and you are only six; his nature is strong and gay, and yours is otherwise” (Brontë 33). Lucy’s analysis of the difference in nature between Graham and Paulina is indicative of her own personal growth in her journey to discovering her own self. Lucy relates to Paulina’s lack of family and unstable living arrangements, and is therefore able to teach Paulina about the situation. That evening, when Paulina is unable to sleep, Lucy calls Paulina to her bed to offer her comfort. Paulina complies, so Lucy soothes her and watches her fall asleep (Brontë 34). Paulina’s intimate attraction to Graham is a result of his active desire to cultivate her, while her distant attraction to Lucy is a result of Lucy’s desire to discover Paulina as an individual—a necessary step in order for Lucy to discover herself. She must understand what nature looks like before she can assess her own ability or define it for herself.

After Paulina moves away, Lucy determines to return to her hometown, continuing her process of self-discovery and self-cultivation. Though she has no family at home, she takes responsibility for herself and ascertains that “to myself alone could I look. I know not that I was of a self-reliant or active nature; but self-reliance and exertion were forced upon me by circumstances” (Brontë 35-36). Lucy determines that she is unaware of her own resiliency, but nevertheless understands that she must find employment out of necessity, taking a position as a nurse to a disabled woman, Miss Marchemont. As a result, Lucy is able to sustain herself in spite of her lack of skill.

Now a young adult, Lucy develops a relationship with Miss Marchemont that resembles the teacher-pupil model similar to that of Graham and Paulina. When Lucy meets Miss Marchemont, Lucy determines that she may not “have strength for the undertaking” in providing for Miss Marchemont as her maid and companion. Miss Marchemont offers Lucy a choice as she struggles to make up her mind: “Perhaps you are right. Try your own method, then; and if it does

not succeed, test mine” (Brontë 36). Miss Marchemont’s decision to allow Lucy to further explore her employment options reflects Rousseau’s position on reasoning with children. If there is something a learner should or should not do, the teacher should “give willingly, [and] refuse unwillingly,” but still exercise his or her supremacy as the teacher. Because reasoning with the learner causes rebellion, teachers should allow students to reason through the choice on their own (Rousseau 55). Miss Marchemont exercises her adult superiority by then asking Lucy to return for visits each day. After about two weeks, Lucy develops a rapport with and senses an obligation to Miss Marchemont, agreeing to be her nurse.

Lucy begins to discover her identity as she experiences a familial bond with Miss Marchemont. Lucy is consumed by Miss Marchemont’s companionship, noting, “Her service was my duty – her pain, my suffering – her relief, my hope – her anger, my punishment – her regard, my reward” (Brontë 37). As their bond strengthens, Lucy identifies Miss Marchemont as a mother figure, associating her scoldings with those of “an irascible mother rating her daughter” (Brontë 37). Lucy becomes aware of her void of identity due to the lack of family in her life, as her relationship with Miss Marchemont progresses, a progression that Froebel suggests is necessary in the well-rounded cultivation of an individual. As Lucy seeks to discover herself, her teacher-pupil bond with Miss Marchemont acts as a replacement for family. Sadly, Miss Marchemont dies, and the now twenty-two year-old Lucy is left with no job and no family.

II. Cultivating Lucy: The Novice Teacher

Again recognizing the need to find work and support herself, Lucy travels to Belgium where she discovers a small French-speaking town called Villette. There, Lucy finds an all-female boarding school, the Rue Fossette, where she meets the headmistress Madame Beck and her cousin, an instructor at the school, Monsieur Paul Emanuel. Madame Beck decides to hire

Lucy as a housekeeper and lady's maid and accommodates Lucy with food and board. Lucy's efforts to discover herself continue through these new relationships and surroundings, including the Rue Fossette garden. It is through these new formations that Brontë presents a complex educational model in which the idea of self-cultivation is epitomized.

Lucy's initial encounters with Madame Beck reveal the headmistress's educational philosophy that student surveillance is necessary in providing a quality education. The first night Lucy spends in her new apartment at the Rue Fossette, Madame Beck sleuths through Lucy's belongings, inspecting her clothes, counting her money, and even making wax impressions of the keys to her trunk (Brontë 68-69). Lucy finds this behavior to be odd, but does not comment on it, and pretends that she is asleep. Privacy is not sacred to Madame Beck; in fact, Lucy notes that Madame Beck's watchwords are "surveillance" and "espionage" (Brontë 72). She thrives on the ability to watch over her establishment, treating all of her employees as spies who report back to her. Lucy characterizes Madame's Beck's approach to administration of her school as a "system" used to regulate a "mass of machinery" (Brontë 72). But she later concedes that "madame's system was not bad – let me do her justice. Nothing could be better than all her arrangements for the physical well-being of her scholars" (Brontë 73). Brontë implies that surveillance in an educational environment is a reasonable measure to ensure security, but overly surveying students may lead to unintentional repercussions that disrupt even Madame Beck's structured system.

As Lucy assesses Madame Beck and her administrative decisions, Brontë is careful to assert that the individual growth she experiences at the Rue Fossette is gradual. Lucy is aware of her personal gain in knowledge since finding the school and notes that "[t]he sensible reader will not suppose that I gained all the knowledge here condensed for his benefit in one month, or in

one half-year. No! what I saw at first was the thriving outside of a large and flourishing educational establishment” (Brontë 74). The outside walls of the school building are unable to contain the positive progress being made inside the school, both in Lucy and in the students. Lucy also distinguishes the Rue Fossette’s educational approach, marking it as valuable compared to other schools:

Here was a corps of teachers and masters, more stringently tasked, as all the real head-labour was to be done by them, in order to save the pupils, yet having their duties so arranged that they relieved each other in quick succession whenever the work was severe: here, in short, was a foreign school; of which the life, movement, and variety made it a complete and most charming contrast to many English institutions of the same kind. (Brontë 74)

With a full staff, the Rue Fossette offers structure in both schedule and curriculum, differing from similar English institutions. Lucy elevates the Rue Fossette, determining that though it is a foreign school, it flourishes with growth. While Madame Beck’s emphasis on surveillance is oppressive, the educational output of the school reflects student progress. Such a distinction marks the Rue Fossette’s educational approach as unique and appealing.

Lucy’s first impression of the Rue Fossette school building indicates her instant awareness of its students’ ongoing growth and development, but for Brontë, a school building is insufficient without an adjoining garden. As such, the Rue Fossette’s adjoining garden serves as an additional site beyond the classroom for cultivating learners:

Behind the house was a large garden, and, in summer, the pupils almost lived out of doors amongst the rose-bushes and the fruit-trees. Under the vast and vine-draped *berceau*, Madame would take her seat on summer afternoons, and send for

the classes, in turns, to sit round her and sew and read. Meantime, masters came and went, delivering short and lively lectures, rather than lessons, and the pupils made notes of their instructions[.] (Brontë 74-75)

Lucy notes that lectures and not lessons are offered in the garden. Typically, lessons incorporate activities such as note taking that are better suited in a controlled environment, such as a classroom, with a variety of hard-surfaced work areas. Lecture, however, requires a level of mobility for the speaker, and because gardens offer open room, they are better suited for such events, providing space for a fluid exchange among students and the speaker. In addition, lectures serve as special occasions that enable students to gain new perspectives from different scholars. Metaphorically, gardens offer the ideal, supplemental environment for learners to absorb such new information. While students interact with the surrounding garden, they are also engaging with the lecture that influences their intellectual development. The school building and its adjacent garden work together to maximize instruction and student learning, mirroring Froebel's vision for kindergarten classrooms.

Despite the pedagogical advantages the garden offers to the students at the Rue Fossette, it has a darker underside that the control-hungry Madame Beck values, serving as a site of surveillance for her. The staff, composed of teachers, masters, and servants, satisfies Madame Beck's instructions by spying on each other and the students, though, because their role is primarily inside the classroom and around the school building, Madame Beck actively surveys the garden on her own. In addition, Madame Beck watches visitors to the Rue Fossette such as Dr. John, a physician in Vilette who is frequently called to the school for medical help and advice. One evening, for instance, Dr. John finds Lucy in the garden with a love letter from an anonymous author. As Dr. John questions Lucy's intentions for the letter, he witnesses Madame

Beck lurking around the garden. Lucy observes, “Behold Madame, in shawl, wrapping-gown, and slippers, softly descending the steps, and stealing like a cat round the garden” (Brontë 112). Madame Beck is stealthy, watching over her students and teachers with the desire to be aware of everything that goes on in her school, seeking to ensure few interruptions and little misbehavior. The Rue Fossette garden is more than a space for learning and exploration—it provides a sense of security for Madame Beck.

For Madame Beck, awareness of the ongoing behavior at her school is a top priority as it helps her maintain control. In *Discipline and Punish* (1975), Michael Foucault points out that in eighteenth-century France, the prison was central to criminal punishment, contributing to the larger “carceral system” that used schools, hospitals, factories, and military institutions as a means to discipline members of society (293, 299-300). Prison systems, and their French counterparts, are only effective if controlled and surveyed properly, as in, consistently. Moreover, Foucault argues that society as a whole becomes a prison when authority treats surveillance as its primary means of control. Madame Beck supports these trends by maintaining constant watch over the daily communications and activities that take place at the Rue Fossette. As the function of Madame Beck’s garden parallels the function of a prison, the staff and students maintain proper behavior and focus, or discipline. But Lucy dismisses Madame Beck’s behavior because she understands the justification for it:

[Madame Beck] seemed to know that keeping girls in distrustful restraint, in blind ignorance, and under a surveillance that left them no moment and no corner for retirement, was not the best way to make them grow up honest and modest women; but she averred that ruinous consequences would ensue if any other

method were tried with continental children: they were so accustomed to restraint[.] (Brontë 73)

Lucy suggests that though treating trustworthy people as though they are untrustworthy can fuel rebellion, students need to be observed frequently in order to keep them on task, particularly those who are conditioned to such scrutiny. While imagination, discovery, and self-activity—as Rousseau and Froebel suggest—are essential to individual growth, for Madame Beck, they are ineffective without discipline and order.

For Brontë, Madame Beck's constant regime of surveillance fosters rebellion as well as control. Maximum surveillance limits the available room to explore and discover the surrounding environment, which leads to a pent up tension that can only be released through challenging the status quo. Gilbert and Gubar note that revolt against Madame Beck occurs when she is robbed by her daughter Désirée (409; Brontë 91). Lucy realizes that no one ever tells Désirée that her actions are wrong; rather, for Madame Beck, "Surveillance must work the whole cure. It failed of course" (Brontë 92). But rebellion as a result of surveillance at the Rue Fossette is not limited to Désirée: the coquettish Genevra Fanshawe also experiences oppression and manages an escape. A student at the Rue Fossette, Genevra confides in Lucy as a friend, though they differ in their level of attraction to elaborate clothing, jewelry, and wealthy company. Genevra manages to find permanent escape from the Rue Fossette without detection in order to elope with Alfred de Hamal. The next morning, Lucy recalls, "Deep was the dismay of *surveillante* teachers, deeper the horror of the defaulting directress," after Madame Beck's staff determines that Genevra left the Rue Fossette without their knowledge (Brontë 455). Genevra's escape undermines the control that Madame Beck desires to maintain in her school because she is able to leave the

establishment without detection and without the supposedly all-knowing Madame Beck's knowledge.

While Brontë points out that constant surveillance leads to rebellious behavior, she also indicates that such oppression leads the individual to cultivate a private life in an effort to find escape. Lucy's development of her private life calls for elusiveness that derails both Madame Beck and the reader. Lucy suspects that Dr. John is Mrs. Bretton's, her godmother's son, Graham, but neglects to inform the reader until after she falls ill in the street and Dr. John takes her to his home. In "Charlotte Brontë and the Scene of Instruction: Authority and Subversion in *Villette*," Joseph Litvak argues that Lucy attempts to manage her relationship with the reader by choosing to reveal Dr. John's true identity at her leisure (474). Lucy discloses information as she deems appropriate, in effect, maintaining a private self that even the reader is not aware of. Though privacy can take many shapes, Lucy further cultivates her own private life by developing a secret love interest in Dr. John. Though she never explicitly notes her infatuation with him, Lucy is clearly captivated by his company:

We took one turn round the gallery; with Graham it was very pleasant to take such a turn. . . he listened so kindly, so teachably; unformalized by scruples lest so to bend his bright handsome head, to gather a woman's rather obscure and stammering explanation, should imperil the dignity of his manhood. And when he communicated information in return, it was with a lucid intelligence that left all his words clear graven on the memory; no explanation of his giving, no fact of his narrating, did I ever forget. (Brontë 201)

Lucy's attraction to Dr. John is generated from the intellectual satisfaction he offers her. Lucy concedes that he is handsome as well as smart, but his effortless ability to converse with her

promotes a fluid exchange and builds the confidence she has in him as potential lover. Of course, Dr. John does not love Lucy in return—he is infatuated with Genevra Fanshawe. Though Lucy is aware of Dr. John’s aspirations to marry Genevra, Lucy still offers to help him court her so he, too, may manage a private life without Madame Beck’s knowledge. Lucy’s relationship with Dr. John remains limited to a friendship, yet her inner self manages an escape from Madame Beck’s surveillance that otherwise inhibits a sense of personal privacy.

By hiding her love for Dr. John from Madame Beck, Lucy maintains a secret life, yet further cultivates her privacy by burying evidence of her inner life. Upon settling into the boarding school as her new residence, Lucy notes the legend of a nun who was buried alive in the garden for breaking her vow of chastity. Lucy identifies the concrete slab in the garden where it is believed the nun’s tomb remains, stating, “Her shadow it was that tremblers had feared, through long generations after her poor frame was dust; her black robe and white veil that, for timid eyes, moonlight and shade had mocked, as they fluctuated in the night-wind through the garden-thicket” (Brontë 104). For the convent who buried this nun, the act of digging signifies their attempt to hide her, her sin, and the disgrace she had brought to the convent. Similarly, Lucy must dig to bury Dr. John’s letters, an act to hide not only her “grief,” a result of his unreciprocated love for her (Brontë 288), but also an intimate aspect of herself from Madame Beck. By burying the letters from Dr. John, Lucy manages to escape oppression, hiding her love for him and maintaining her privacy. Madame Beck’s desire to control her school by constant observation ultimately results in pushing Lucy and others away rather than drawing them closer. For Brontë, such surveillance fosters resistance and by experiencing it within the learning environment, the individual learns to self-cultivate.

Although Lucy struggles with maintaining a private life that Madame Beck is not aware of, she works to gain an understanding herself. As a child in Mrs. Bretton's home, Lucy looks to Graham and Paulina to discover her personal identity, but as an adult learner in the Rue Fossette, Lucy relies on introspection and introversion in order to explore her nature and still maintain privacy. Dr. John's letters do not bring fulfillment to Lucy, but grief instead, and just before burying them, she experiences "a sad, lonely satisfaction" (Brontë 287). Though she is lonely, Lucy is able to achieve internal fulfillment by removing evidence of her grief from her life. Here, Lucy illuminates the separation of her inner self and her outer life. After burying Dr. John's letters, Lucy describes an odd sense of mystery that surrounds her: "This done, I rested, leaning against the tree; lingering, like any other mourner, beside a newly-sodded grave. The air of the night was very still, but dim with a peculiar mist, which changed the moonlight into a luminous haze. In this air, or this mist, there was some quality—electrical, perhaps—which acted in strange sort upon me" (Brontë 288). Lucy suggests that she has reconciled the struggle between her inner self and outer life by allowing an odd sense of mystery to surround her, rather than by depending on a known other such as Dr. John to bring about that resolution. This decision inspires her independence, and Lucy notes, "If life be a war, it seemed my destiny to conduct it single-handed" (Brontë 288). As Lucy contemplates her emotions and ability to navigate through life, she determines that the hard, active struggle between her inner and outer self is ineffective in achieving her destiny; she can instead maintain independence as an individual if both her inner and outer life work together in a productive and mysterious tension.

For Brontë, Lucy's ability to manage a private sense of self while living under the rigid surveillance of the Rue Fossette illustrates that rebellion can lead to education and, ultimately, to self-cultivation. Lucy not only desires to discover herself, but also realizes that an understanding

of herself lends to her ability to function independently of Dr. John and Madame Beck. Her rebellion against Madame Beck is influenced by a natural desire to survive. Yet Lucy also challenges her private life in burying Dr. John's letters. Rousseau argues the individual is stronger when he or she rebels against his or her natural self (45), hence Lucy's declaration that she will survive the battle of life even if she must do it on her own. Syd Thomas, in "'References to Persons Not Named, or Circumstances Not Defined' in *Villette*," comments that "Lucy's identity seems to be steadfast throughout the novel; she appears not to change in any significant way" (568). But while Lucy's identity remains consistent, Lucy has to come into a realization of herself, just as Brontë comes into a realization of the garden's power as a pedagogical influence and space. For Brontë, the garden is intended to guide students in discovering themselves; similarly, for Lucy, the garden is a site of introversion in which she self-reflects and becomes more intimately aware of her private life.

III. Harvesting a Headmistress: Cultivating Perfection in the Garden

While the dark underside of the garden serves as a site for surveillance and cultivation of the individual, it also accommodates the necessary student-centered activity that encourages individual growth. Moreover, the garden maintains its value as it continues to flourish, especially in a hospitable sense, welcoming students to enter it:

All day long the broad folding-doors and the two-leaved casements stood wide open: settled sunshine seemed naturalized in the atmosphere; clouds were far off, sailing away beyond sea, resting, no doubt, round islands such as England—that dear land of mists—but withdrawn wholly from the drier continent. We lived far more in the garden than under a roof: classes were held, and meals partaken of, in the 'grand berceau.' (Brontë 125-26)

The garden welcomes students and flourishes most when they are present. For Brontë, a safe learning environment welcomes student activity. In contrast, the garden is desolate when there is no activity within it. When the students go home for an eight-week summer recess, Lucy remarks, “How gloomy the forsaken garden, grey now with the dust of a town summer departed!” (Brontë 153). The garden is valuable to the students because it encourages a variety of activity, supporting the Froebelian principle that activity increases learning. Students value holidays and social gatherings, particularly those that offer a break from school. But by participating in activity in the garden, students are still able to engage with their environment and learn, even without the traditional classroom experience. Lucy describes, “The programme of the fête-day's proceedings comprised: Presentation of plate, collation in the garden, dramatic performance (with pupils and teachers for actors), a dance and supper” (Brontë 126). The fête-day's agenda is still organized, but it centers on enabling participants to experience the festivities. Likewise, Jane Eyre encourages Adèle to participate in self-activity, but at the Rue Fossette, the teachers participate in the activity with the students, associating the teachers as learners with the students.

In addition to supporting student-centered activity, the garden is a safe environment in which individual vitality thrives. For instance, Lucy finds sanctuary in the garden where it is quiet: “I took refuge in the garden. The whole day did I wander or sit there alone, finding warmth in the sun, shelter among the trees, and a sort of companionship in my own thoughts” (Brontë 128). Lucy takes advantage of the opportunity for introversion in the comfortable environment of the garden. Because the garden is a sanctuary, even Madame Beck's daughter Georgette is able to find healing as a result of the garden while Lucy is able to rest. She comments, “To ‘sit in sunshine calm and sweet’ is said to be excellent for weak people; it gives them vital force”

(Brontë 192). The garden at the Rue Fossette holds significance as it serves as the natural environment that Rousseau describes as necessary for learning.

Indeed, the garden encourages individual growth, but when the garden is bustling, Lucy finds sanctuary in the classroom:

I felt a pleasure in betaking myself—not to the garden, where servants were busy propping up long tables, placing seats, and spreading cloths in readiness for the collation but to the schoolrooms, now empty, quiet, cool, and clean; their walls fresh stained, their planked floors fresh scoured and scarce dry; flowers fresh gathered adorning the recesses in pots, and draperies, fresh hung, beautifying the great windows. . . The glass-door of this ‘classe,’ or schoolroom, opened into the large berceau; acacia-boughs caressed its panes, as they stretched across to meet a rose-bush blooming by the opposite lintel: in this rose-bush bees murmured busy and happy. I commenced reading. (Brontë 130)

Similar to Lucy’s description of the bountiful garden at the Rue Fossette, her refuge in the classroom depicts a clean and peaceful environment. Potted flowers are present in order to bring the influence of the outside garden indoors while even the rose bushes are content, a reflection of the individual who finds sanctuary in the classroom.

As Lucy is able to find sanctuary in the classroom, she begins to take ownership of her whole identity—her inner self and outer life—recognizing herself as a teacher. It is clear that Lucy has realized herself as a teacher one evening when Paulina’s father, Mr. Home, questions Lucy’s employment. Lucy states, “‘I am a teacher’ . . . and [I] was rather glad of the opportunity of saying this” (Brontë 276). This declaration affirms Lucy’s realization that though working at Madame Beck’s establishment can be oppressive, teaching is gainful and respectable

employment for a woman in Villette. Furthermore, Lucy's opportunity to earn her own income establishes her as free in spite of the oppression she experiences under Madame Beck's constant surveillance. Such independence empowers Lucy to talk openly about her reasons for teaching when addressing Mr. Home, explaining it is primarily "for the sake of the money I get" (Brontë 276). Lucy's self-motivation impresses Mr. Home, who in turn offers her a position as Paulina's personal teacher. Though Lucy declines, she contemplates opportunities for employment beyond Madame Beck's establishment—further solidifying the reconciliation of her inner self and outer life as well as developing an understanding of her opportunity as an independent individual.

The illumination of Lucy's identity as a teacher indicates her transition from an adult learner at the hands of Madame Beck to an independent teacher; Lucy's reconciliation of her inner self and outer life enables her to achieve independence as an individual and earn recognition from Madame Beck. After learning that Lucy is "liable to frequent invitations from a *château* and a great *hôtel*," or the company of Paulina's father, Mr. Home, who is also known as the wealthy Monsieur de Bassompierre, Madame Beck offers Lucy freedom from surveillance. Lucy notes, "I went out a good deal, with the entire consent of Madame Beck" (Brontë 284). Of course this is outside the head schoolmistress's character, but her tyranny is now less effective on Lucy—at least since Lucy is functioning as a whole individual rather than in separate selves. In "Teacher, Author, Book, and Life: Charlotte Brontë," Margret Buchmann attributes Madame Beck's graciousness to her desire to reward Lucy for her work as an English teacher (170). Certainly, Lucy's work as an English teacher at the Rue Fossette deserves compensation, but beyond this, Lucy's independence is underscored by the liberation Madame Beck grants her.

Despite Lucy's cultivating independence as a teacher—and independence from Madame Beck—she inevitably develops a mentor-like relationship with Monsieur Paul Emanuel, a fellow instructor and love interest at the Rue Fossette. Just as Jane Eyre sees Rochester and St. John as mentors and love interests, Lucy experiences the burdening effects of a teacher-centered education from her mentor. At one point, Monsieur Paul asks Lucy if she will play a role in his vaudeville as a substitute for a student who has fallen ill and is no longer able to participate. In doing so, Monsieur Paul not only demands Lucy's attention, but also limits her responses:

‘Listen!’ he said. ‘The case shall be stated, and you shall then answer me Yes, or No; and according to your answer shall I ever after estimate you.’ The scarce-suppressed impetus of a most irritable nature glowed in his cheek, fed with sharp shafts his glances, a nature—the injudicious, the mawkish, the hesitating, the sullen, the affected, above all, the unyielding, might quickly render violent and implacable. Silence and attention was the best balm to apply: I listened. (Brontë 131)

Monsieur Paul's harsh demeanor aggrandizes his position as a mentor while subjugating Lucy as his mentee. She recognizes that responding to his temper by simply listening to him is the least resistant way of appeasing him, and in effect, assenting to his terms of the conversation marginalizes her input. At first, Lucy rejects the proposition, but she soon agrees and commences practicing her new role with the teaching guidance of Monsieur Paul, furthering their mentor-like relationship in spite of his harsh discourse.

Though Monsieur Paul serves as a mentor for Lucy, his educational methods reflect those of the Victorian era for Brontë. While teacher-centered learning environments remove the learning focus from the student, they also encourage negative reinforcement and student-

response teaching that limit student engagement and comprehension. When trying to convince Lucy to participate in his vaudeville, Monsieur Paul says, “‘Englishwomen are either the best or the worst of their sex. Dieu sait que je les déteste comme la peste, ordinairement’ (this between his recreant teeth). ‘I apply to an Englishwoman to rescue me. What is her answer—Yes, or No?’”¹⁸ (Brontë 131). Though Monsieur Paul generally despises Englishwomen, he enlists Lucy for help, of course limiting her number of eligible responses, and moreover, appealing to her nationality and gender—as if demoralizing her will evoke a positive response. Lucy could certainly say “no,” but she is aware of Monsieur Paul’s “vexed, fiery” temper. Here, Monsieur Paul demonstrates an aspect of oppression that renders the victim cornered, thus leaving Lucy with no other option than to substitute for the ill student. As Monsieur Paul’s mentee, Lucy desires to please him with her progress, yet he neglects to offer her affirmation. Lucy says, “And I read. He did not commend; at some passages he scowled and stamped. He gave me a lesson: I diligently imitated” (Brontë 132). Even after Monsieur Paul corners Lucy and she disdainfully agrees to help him, he loses patience as she learns her new part. Thus, Lucy momentarily retreats to her inner self—that which is separated from her outer life—and mechanically mimics Monsieur Paul’s illustration of the vaudeville character he desires for Lucy to portray. Likewise, *Jane Eyre*’s Miss Scatcherd, a teacher at Lowood school, reprimands Jane’s friend, Helen, for dirty finger nails rather than praising her for correctly answering questions. Helen’s reaction to Miss Scatcherd mirrors Lucy’s obedience to Monsieur Paul: “‘It is far better to endure patiently a smart which nobody feels but yourself, than to commit a hasty action whose evil consequences will extend to all connected with you’” (Brontë 67). For the oppressed mentee, Lucy, passivity is a more effective means of achieving the learning outcome. Her imitation of Monsieur Paul is a rejection of otherwise engaged learning and her comprehension is thus systematically memorized

¹⁸ God knows, I generally hate them like the plague.

material instead of learned knowledge. Such student-response teaching also echoes *The Professor's* Crimsworth's repetitious reading lessons at the Rue d'Isabelle, and for Brontë, the educational methods of the Victorian era.

While Monsieur Paul portrays a teacher-centered example in his mentorship to Lucy, he also denies Lucy the sanctuary she finds in the classroom and from the garden. When Lucy is dressed for the highly anticipated *fête*, she decides to rest in a classroom. She acknowledges that the garden is typically her first choice of retreat, but finds the classroom environment to be equally as safe: "The closed door of the first classe—my sanctuary—offered no obstacle; it burst open, and a paletôt and a bonnet grec filled the void; also two eyes first vaguely struck upon, and then hungrily dived into me"—until Monsieur Paul barges in (Brontë 130). Interrupting Lucy's reading, Monsieur Paul opposes the classroom as a refuge from commotion, independently creating disruption. After Lucy concedes to substitute in his vaudeville and she begins practicing her lines with him, further clamor occurs in the garden outside the classroom. Lucy recalls his reaction: "'Ça ira!' he cried; and as voices began sounding from the garden, and white dresses fluttering among the trees, he added: 'You must withdraw: you must be alone to learn this. Come with me'" (Brontë 132). Certainly, Lucy would remain comfortable in the classroom, but for Monsieur Paul, the noise is a distraction for his teacher-centered—rather, self-centered—instructional methods. The classroom and the garden are not representative of learning environments for Monsieur Paul; hence, his instructional strategies prove to be the antithesis of Brontë's effort to portray the garden as a metaphor for growth of the individual.

Though Monsieur Paul is domineering in his approach to teaching, he is—like Madame Beck—unable to resist Lucy's strengthening independence. Lucy manages to learn her lines and successfully play her role in Monsieur Paul's vaudeville. Her achievement wins his respect, and

he undergoes a “metamorphosis,” acting “vivacious, kind, and social,” and even asks Lucy to dance (Brontë 139). Over time, Monsieur Paul and Lucy become intimate friends. And while he demonstrates more sensitivity toward Lucy, she further develops her independence, contemplating how to start her own school (Brontë 349). Monsieur Paul supports her ambition, and in his affection for her, rents a house that she can operate as her own educational establishment. Lucy, excited and grateful, describes her new “Externat de Demoiselles,” fondly, noting its garden-like features:

[I]ts vista closed in a French window with vines trained about the panes, tendrils, and green leaves kissing the glass. Silence reigned in this dwelling. . . the recess of the single ample window was filled with a green stand, bearing three green flower-pots, each filled with a fine plant glowing in bloom; in one corner appeared a guéridon with a marble top, and upon it a work-box, and a glass filled with violets in water. The lattice of this room was open; the outer air breathing through, gave freshness, the sweet violets lent fragrance. (Brontë 465-66)

Though the school is currently uninhabited, the presence of the fresh air and blossoming plants indicates the vitality it possesses. Furthermore, the location of Lucy’s school in town is indicative of its economic potential that will ultimately lead to economic prosperity and true independence for its directress. This “little school” holds much prospect even though it is situated in a town whose name, Villette, literally means “Little Town.” In *Victorian Conversion Narratives and Reading Communities*, Emily Walker Heady suggests that Brontë’s choice of title is intended to expand across communities, indicating that Lucy’s story of individual and economic independence is universal (63). Moreover, for Brontë, all individuals can achieve perfection—like Helen, for example, who sees her union with God after death as the pinnacle to existence,

and therefore, the completion of herself. Lucy's perfection is marked by the establishment of her school and is underscored by yet another biblical reference: the number "seven"—God's indication of perfection and completion. Hence, the address of Lucy's school, "Numéro 7" signifies the culmination of her education. This entrepreneurial gain further liberates Lucy from the oppressive surveillance of Madame Beck and allows her to practice her personal educational theory independently of Monsieur Paul.

In light of Lucy's "perfection," Brontë leaves the reader with a perfect mystery: Monsieur Paul travels by sea to Guadeloupe for three years, but does he successfully return home? With anticipation, Lucy describes the weather on the evening she is expecting his return. In her closing thoughts, Lucy notes, "That storm roared frenzied, for *seven* days. It did not cease till the Atlantic was strewn with wrecks: it did not lull till the deeps had gorged their full of sustenance. Not till the destroying angel of tempest had achieved his *perfect* work" (Brontë 475 emphasis added). By acknowledging the perfection of the storm, Lucy acknowledges its necessity. For Brontë, this lingering question is borne out of her desire for the reader to cultivate his or her own perfect ending.

While Lucy's estrangement from herself is indicative of her personal struggle to determine her identity, Brontë illustrates that discovery is not limited to formal learning spaces such as classrooms and gardens—it also occurs within the individual relationship to these various places and structures. Certainly, the garden fosters the intellectual growth of the individual, but ultimately, self-cultivation is the result of a reconciliation between two selves: the inner and outer. And though surveillance can inhibit this growth, the resistance that is created as a result leads to an independent and productive member of society.

Conclusion

In *The Professor*, *Jane Eyre*, and *Villette*, Charlotte Brontë masterfully moves between the divided self and the mature individual while navigating from the oppressive classroom to the liberating garden, documenting her educational philosophy. Widely acknowledged is Brontë's biographical influence on her work, as they—*Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, in particular—are popular for their themes of gender relations, social class, and religion. Yet, Brontë's works also encompass an assertion of her position on Victorian education as well as her ideas for the direction it should move. Beyond Brontë's biography, other influences and interests are also documented in a series of her letters dated between 1832 and 1855. In her personal correspondence to family, friends, and potential publishers, Brontë illuminates the development of her educational philosophy through discussing her personal struggles with teaching, passion for self-improvement, and the quest for personal perfection.

While Brontë enjoyed reading the work of other authors, she spent a significant amount of time writing and sending letters, particularly to her closest friend, Ellen Nussey. Brontë and Nussey met as young girls while attending Margaret Wooller's school in Roe Head, Mirfield and remained friends for twenty four years. Margaret Smith explains that a collection of 350 letters from Brontë to Nussey survive, divulging Brontë's interests and personality. In her letter to Nussey dated July 21, 1832, at just sixteen years old, Brontë suggests to Nussey that she may, too, learn to love literature: "you might acquire a desired taste for elegant literature and even Poetry which is indeed included under that general term" (3). Following Brontë's death in 1855, Nussey struggled with publishing the letters for fear of revealing personal information of people mentioned in them. In 1895, Nussey was finally persuaded to sell Brontë's letters to Thomas James Wise under the impression that he would entrust them to the Kensington Museum, but he

instead gradually sold most of the letters, dispersing them among various collectors throughout Britain and America, earning a profit (Brontë 255).¹⁹

Brontë's correspondence with Nussey reveals her understanding of the difference between the natural and the cultivated teacher. In a letter to Nussey, dated August, 7, 1841, Brontë writes, "I know my place is a favorable one for a governess—what dismays and haunts me sometimes is that I have no natural knack for my vocation—if teaching only—were requisite it would be smooth and easy" (33). For Brontë, teaching theory and application was "easy"—it was her lack of instructress's intuition that made being a governess a greater challenge than it already was. Yet, perhaps it is her natural struggle that yields her as a respectable educational theorist. Brontë experienced occupational challenges in her situations with the Sidgwick and the White family that a natural teacher may not otherwise recognize as problematic. As a result, she endured through them, writing about her experiences to her sisters as well as to Nussey. Because Brontë understood the challenges involved with teaching, she was better equipped to guide others in their teaching endeavors; thus, she articulates the art of teaching from a practical perspective and does not limit it to an argument driven by intuition or opinion. In addition, by acknowledging that she has no natural knack for teaching, she acknowledges that teaching can be a career in which an individual can be cultivated in the ability to teach, versus the calling that it is for some. This is not to dismiss the natural ability of any born teacher, but it is to point out that, for Brontë, nature dominates what man cultivates and to submit to nature in educating any individual is to take a path of lesser resistance.

Though a dichotomy exists between born and cultivated teachers, Brontë points out that any individual can be successful in the profession, given the level of his or her desire to teach. In

¹⁹ Margaret Smith, editor of *Selected Letters* by Charlotte Brontë, offers additional biography and history of various people in Charlotte's life and letters.

a letter dated May 12, 1848 to William Smith Williams, Brontë's friend and literary advisor for her publisher Smith, Elder & Co., she offers an explanation of what constitutes an effective teacher:

The one great qualification necessary to the task: the faculty, not merely of acquiring but of imparting knowledge; the power of influencing young minds; that natural fondness for—that innate sympathy with children. . . He or She who possesses this faculty, this sympathy—though perhaps not otherwise highly accomplished—need never fear failure in the career of instruction. (Brontë 106)

Brontë credits educators with the responsibility they have in the cultivation of youthful learners. And though a great burden exists for the teacher, it is possible to be a successful teacher given his or her desire to share knowledge because of his or her love of knowledge. In addition, Brontë offers wisdom to Williams's daughters from her personal experience on discovering herself as a teacher: "The young Teacher's chief anxiety, when she sets out in life, always is, to know a great deal; her chief fear that she should not know enough; brief experience will in most instances, shew her that this anxiety has been misdirected. She will rarely be found too ignorant for her pupils; the demand on her knowledge will not often be larger than she can answer" (Brontë 107). Brontë indicates that in spite of the amount of knowledge a potential teacher may or may not possess, the students' needs will not exceed what the teacher has to offer. Brontë acknowledges that teaching children is not an easy profession, but it is made easier with an innate passion to influence them.

Notwithstanding her experience as a governess and personal beliefs on teaching as a vocation, it is no surprise that Brontë's educational philosophy reflects scholars such as Coleridge and Wordsworth, as her letters convey her respect of their work. Certainly, Charlotte's

father, a proponent of Rousseauian educational ideology, encouraged interaction with books and reading among his children, as his library was always open and available to them—but Brontë and her siblings spent a significant amount of time reading and writing on their own. In her letters, she commonly references or quotes Tennyson, Southey, Milton, Dickens, Wordsworth, and Coleridge, making clear her reverence toward their work. After taking an especial interest in the poems and literary criticism of Samuel Coleridge's son, Hartley Coleridge, Brontë chose to send Hartley a copy of a story she wrote in her youth. Her letter to him, dated December 10, 1840, indicates that he was not impressed with her work, yet she is grateful for his feedback, noting, "Seriously Sir, I am very much obliged to you for your kind and candid letter" (Brontë 27). In the same letter, her admiration of Wordsworth is evident,²⁰ quoting lines 21 and 22 from his poem "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" (1804) as she responds to Coleridge's rejection of her prose. Another letter, dated June 16, 1847, indicates that Brontë sent copies of an unpopular publication of a collaborative book of poems written by Charlotte and her sisters, Emily and Anne, to various authors, including William Wordsworth and Hartley Coleridge (Brontë 84). While Charlotte Brontë favored Wordsworth's and Coleridge's work, she desired to share her own work with them in the hopes they would recognize her as an enterprising author and poet in her own right.

As Brontë worked to identify herself as an author, she struggled with the idea of inactivity, or a lack of self-improvement, and worked to find ways in which she could personally improve and encourage the advancement of others. In addition to the Smilesean self-help rhetoric that encouraged Brontë's diligence in advancing the growth of the individual in her literature, her parents instilled in her the value of learning from a young age. Phyllis Bentley's *The Brontës*

²⁰ Clearly, Brontë admired Wordsworth's poetry, sending a copy of *The Prelude* to Elizabeth Gaskell following Wordsworth's death in 1850. See Brontë's letter to Gaskell, dated August 27, 1850 (173).

describes the literary aspirations of Mr. and Mrs. Brontë, noting that books scattered throughout the Brontë household acted as stimulation for the Brontë children. In addition, both the Reverend Brontë and his wife, Maria, were aspiring poets (13). We now recognize, too, that each of the Brontë children—Charlotte, Branwell, Emily, and Anne—also possessed artful talents as they were avid writers, painters, and sketch artists. Aware of their talents and capabilities, Charlotte and her sisters aspired to start a boarding school of their own—an interesting parallel to Lucy Snowe’s desire to become a headmistress. Charlotte was enthusiastic about their efforts, as starting a school would not only be a means to personally self-improve, but also an opportunity to support the necessity of education. In a letter to her former teacher and love interest Constantin Heger, dated July 24, 1844, she explains, “I fear nothing so much as idleness—lack of employment—inertia—lethargy of the faculties—when the body is idle, the spirit suffers cruelly” (Brontë 51-52). Brontë’s idea of self-improvement is grounded in the individual’s willingness to engage in activity as well as his or her vitality, or personal and spiritual productivity. But more so, she recognizes a point in an individual’s life in which he or she must make the choice between idleness and activity. In essence, an individual must choose education in order to self-improve.

Of course, Brontë did not limit her discussion of self-improvement to merely thoughts on education; rather, between her letters and her literature, she offers a radical position on the development of the individual: personal perfection is achievable. Brontë’s enthusiasm to start her own school demonstrates her independence, similar to that which we see in *Villette* when Lucy determines to become a headmistress and start a school in order to escape the oppressive surveillance of Madame Beck. Here, Lucy’s independence is marked by her liberation from the Rue Fossette and her ability to function autonomously from a domineering power structure. The

establishment of Lucy's school, for Brontë, illustrates the individual's crowning achievement: maximized personal growth through self-improvement, or personal perfection, suggesting that Brontë as a developing pedagogue also achieved perfection through independence when she determined to establish her own school at the Haworth Parsonage.²¹

Perfection, for Brontë, is not consistent with the standard definition because it denotes that it can be achieved by any individual; perfection is not a standard measure because it is different for everyone. Brontë's depiction of perfection is a metaphor for completed growth, similar to her representation of the garden as a metaphor. An individual must grow into perfection, and as long as the garden exists, the individual will flourish. If the individual chooses to stop growing, he or she will cease to contribute to the surrounding environment. Lucy characterizes the culmination of growth, noting, "I like to see flowers growing, but when they are gathered, they cease to please. I look on them as things rootless and perishable; their likeness to life makes me sad" (Brontë 326). If something living is not growing, then it is not productive, as in, effectively functioning independently. Of course, the process of achieving perfection is not without flaw, and for Brontë, the end result is not the same for everyone. While Lucy's perfection is obtained by beginning her own school, Helen's perfection is achieved through death and a union with God. It is no surprise that Brontë reveals her understanding of perfection at the end of her last published work, *Villette*. Because it is different for everyone, we live with the notion that perfection cannot be achieved, when in reality, we have achieved it through our ability as independent people, honoring the essence of *Émile*—that man is cultivated by man, and man's maturity is marked by his independence.

²¹ In the same letter to Heger, dated July 24, 1844, Brontë notes, "Our Parsonage is a fairly large house—with some alterations—there will be room for five or six boarders" (51).

Brontë's achievements as a female Victorian author are well established, but attention must be directed to the maturity of her ideas as a pedagogical theorist based on concepts that can be found in both her literature and letters. Truly a self-cultivated woman who believed in the power of education—even if teaching did not come naturally to her—Brontë's theory stands in its own right and provokes thought regarding educational themes that may be evident with further Victorian literary analysis.

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