Preliminaries: On Postformalism

1. By “misreading,” as I trust will become clear, I mean all attempts to reduce the constitutive polysemy of a novel to a monologic or monosemic “meaning.”

2. For some poststructuralists the granting of any authority to the text is mere formalism; to others any search for the kind of discursive meaning that Iser finds inevitable, any act of interpretation, is formalist. For Jane Tompkins, for example, critical concern with meaning and interpretation is formalist, or at best postformalist, so that even reader-response or “affective” criticism “owes . . . almost everything to the formalist doctrines it claims to have overturned” (202): “What has happened,” she says, “is that the locus of meaning has simply been transferred from the text to the reader” (206), with the result that “virtually nothing has changed. . . . Professors and students alike practice criticism as usual: only the vocabulary with which they perform their analyses has altered” (225). Stanley Fish seems to have accepted that his is a less revolutionary role than he had earlier claimed; the introduction to Is There a Text in This Class? is entitled “Introduction, or How I Stopped Worrying and Learned to Love Interpretation.”

3. Though this seems “natural,” it is, of course, a procedure as implicated in theory and ideology and as radically contingent as any other, though since it seems “natural” to me, that specific ideology and contingency are more or less invisible. As Bakhtin says, in insisting on the necessity of dialogue, one cannot see the back of one’s own head. See also Fish’s “Commentary: The Young and the Restless” (303–16),
on the "dilemma" of antifoundationalism, that is, its necessity for itself operating from something very like a foundation.

PART I. Intertextualities

1. See the epigraph to this study from Leon S. Roudiez's introduction to Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language*, which seems worth repeating here: "Kristeva's work reminds us that theory is inseparable from practice—that theory evolves out of practice and is modified by further practice" (12).

2. Kristeva adopts the term "ideologeme" from Medvedev/Bakhtin and relates it specifically to genre and intertextuality:

One of the problems for semiotics is to replace the former, rhetorical division of genres with a *typology of texts*; that is, to define the specificity of different textual arrangements by placing them within the general text (culture) of which they are a part and which is in turn, part of them. The ideologeme is the intersection of a given textual arrangement (a semiotic practice) with the utterances (sequences) that it either assimilates into its own space or to which it refers in the space of exterior texts (semiotic practices). The ideologeme is that intertextual function read as "materialized" at the different structural levels of each text, and which stretches along the entire length of its trajectory, giving it its historical and social coordinates. This is not an interpretive step coming after analysis in order to explain "as ideological" what was first "perceived" as "linguistic." (36-37)

Chapter 1. Species and Scenes

1. See Bakhtin, *Dialogic* 279, on the word or utterance that partakes of a social (or here, literary) dialogue: "The word is born in a dialogue as a living rejoinder within it; the word is shaped in dialogic interaction with an alien word that is already in the object. A word forms a concept of its own object in a dialogic way." Thus "edited by" is refracted by all its other appearances on the title pages of novels of various genres and "converses" or debates with them.

2. If Charlotte Brontë had read this novel, she would certainly have been moved by the episode in which Rose's mother has an operation for cataracts and Rose spends "a fortnight in town that she might be under the doctor's care" (160), for Charlotte accompanied her father to Manchester and stayed during his cataract operation, and it was in Manchester that she began writing *Jane Eyre*. (All citations to *Jane Eyre* are to the 1969 Clarendon edition, listed in the Bibliography.)

3. For this and subsequent information about the publication of
Disraeli's novel, I am indebted to the generosity and expert knowl­edge of Robert O'Kell.

4. "Aquilius" is identified as Eagles in Allott (95). Some, like the Weekly Chronicle reviewer, thought Marsh might be the author of Jane Eyre: "We were tempted more than once to believe that Mrs. Marsh was veiling herself under an assumed editorship, for this autobiogra­phy partakes greatly of her simple, penetrating style, and, at times, of her love of nature; but a man's more vigorous hand is, we think, perceptible" (Clarendon 631).

5. This is a dramatic example of the echoing of character names in the fiction of early and mid-nineteenth-century fiction, especially within genres. Such repetition was rife in the governess novels discussed in chapter 2, and in different sets of names in other genres, e.g., the repeated names in women's religious novels. See Susan Rowland Tush, "George Eliot's Review of 'The Silly Novels by Lady Novelists' and Her Own Fictional Practice."

6. Lytton's novels were widely known and readily available. Pel­ham, The Disowned, and a number of his other works, for example, were available to the Brontës in the Keighley Mechanics' Institute library near their home (Brontë Society Transactions 11.5:355).

7. Brontë's Angrian tales had something of the Disraelian "Ori­entalism" in them, but she had, she thought, purged herself with the writing of a down-to-earth novel, The Professor, in which the hero would not spend a guinea he had not earned. The new edi­tion of Contarini appeared while The Professor was still making its futile rounds of publishers, rejected, Brontë tells us, chiefly because the publishers "would have liked something more imaginative and poetical—something more consonant with a highly wrought fancy, with a taste for pathos, with sentiments more tender, elevated, un­worldly" (4). It is tempting, then, to think of Brontë in Jane Eyre as deliberately playing off of Disraeli's "Angrian" autobiography, the per­fect foil for pointing up and defining her own new vision of poetic reality.

8. According to Louis James, "it is very hard to define what a 'do­mestic story' is. . . . The term denotes not so much a particular subject as an approach to the subject. G. D. Pitt [The Little Wife, 1841] defined a domestic romance when he declared 'the events are brought home to the evidence of our senses, as consonant with scenes of real life' " (114). Stories of domestic romance, James says, "tell of people one can recog­nize. The reader can feel at home with it, place him (or more usually her) self in the picture. At the same time the realism is illusory" (134).
For “domestic” in the value system of Jane Eyre see below, the end of ch. 7.

9. I do not find it among the twenty-eight Hofland titles listed in “Where the Brontës Borrowed Books; The Keighley Mechanics’ Institute” (Brontë Society Transactions 11.5:344–58). However, if the new edition of Ellen announced in the Athenaeum on 6 March 1847 is too late to serve as a “germ” for Jane Eyre, it does suggest that Ellen was still in the novel-readers’ repertoire in 1847.

Chapter 2. Reality and Narratability

1. This rather uncommon name appeared, with a slight difference in spelling, in Geraldine Jewsbury’s Zoe, a novel I will have occasion to mention several times later, wherein Peter Brocclehurst was a gossiping tailor; there is no apparent resemblance between the two characters. The “Brockenhurst thicket” appears in Scott’s completion of Strutt’s Queenhoo-Hall, published in the appendix to the 1829 edition of Waverley.

2. Rigby refers to Lowood as “a sort of Dothegirls Hall,” and Chorley compares Brocklehurst to Squeers, as does the Christian Remembrancer reviewer (Allott 106, 71, 90).

3. Cf. the Reverend Mr. Drummer in G. W. M. Reynolds, The Mysteries of London (1846): “While he bolted huge mouthfuls of boiled beef, he favoured the company with an excellent moral dissertation upon abstemiousness and self-mortification” (2:30).

4. The prevalence of the ghostly was greater in the past century than it is now. In August 1848, the North British Review (8:213–26) reviewed a German, French, and British book of that year treating “Ghosts and Ghost-Seers” and reported that the German Seeress of Prevorst, Frederica Hauffe, had been introduced “a few years ago by an English gentlewoman, widely reputed for her novels of remorselessly real life, and at the time a thorough realist in philosophy, and a person whose goodness has never assumed the form . . . called piety at all.” That woman was Catherine Crowe, author/compiler of The Night Side of Nature, the English volume under review and translator of the German volume. The reviewer thought dreams, presentiments, and sensuous illusions of various kinds might be the product of “nervous sympathy” and reported approvingly that Crowe thought the greatest of the seeress’s revelations was “that the world of spirits is inter-diffused through the one we inhabit.”

5. “The only making of sense that counts in a formalist reading is the last one, and I wanted to say that everything a reader does, even
if he later undoes it, is a part of the 'meaning experience' and should not be discarded" (Fish, Class 3–4).

Chapter 3. Dialogic Genres

1. The first nine chapters have actually "recorded in detail" only some seven months—two and a half at Gateshead, four and a half at Lowood (Clarendon 611)—so the ratio of chapters to months is even more disproportionate than the apologetic narrator admits.

2. There seems no reason to doubt the English Catalogue date, 1835, though Block, the Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature, Thomson, and R. Colby suggest 1845.

3. Though this is one of the more obscure and critically unremarked novels referred to in this study, it may well have been known to the Brontës: it was published by Aylott in 1844; the Brontë poems, by Aylott and Jones early in 1846.

4. See the Quarterly Review for 1848 and Helen Shipton in the Monthly Packet for November 1896 (Tillotson, 149n).

5. The parallels between this part of Jane Eyre and Austen's Northanger Abbey are remarkable: the approach to the abbey and to Thornfield Hall (JE 105, NA 162–63); the modernity of Jane's room (117) and the disappointing modernity of the abbey (162–63); the "deserted wing" of the abbey where Catherine suspects General Tilney may have incarcerated his wife, "alleged" to have died nine years ago, and the death of Rowland Rochester nine years ago; the secret, which we know but Jane does not at this point, of what inhabits the third story of Thornfield Hall. Brontë's letters, however, show conclusively that in January 1848, months after Jane Eyre was published, she had not read any Austen, and in 1850 had read only Pride and Prejudice, which she found tepid (Letters 2:179, 3:79, in Wise and Symington). This is a remarkable demonstration of how the generic tradition can explain away what seems "clearly" to be "influence" or borrowing.

Relocating Gothic myth or mysticism in prosaic reality is not only a device of parodic travesty (Bakhtin, Dialogic 57), as in Austen, but an example in Jane Eyre of the kind of "serious" parody that Bakhtin finds constitutive of the novel as a genre.

6. There's another inhabitant in a "deserted wing," this time Fatherless Fanny herself in a variation of the "rightful heir" motif, which will be discussed later in the chapter. Her mother, in order to protect her from harm, entrusts her as a baby to Mrs. Bolton, the governess, who puts her in the "deserted wing" of Pemberton Abbey: "nor has it ever been supposed, since Mr. Hamilton's [her father's] absence,
that any one inhabited that mansion, excepting the servant left to take care of it, whose superstitious fear of the wing I inhabit, which is reported to be haunted by a man dressed in complete armour, effectually secures me from any interruption from her” ([Reeve] 264).

7. The Clarendon editors, citing Winifred Gérin’s *Branwell Brontë*, quote one of Branwell’s unfinished stories in which he describes the folk belief in the Gytrash, “‘a spectre neither at all similar to the Ghosts of those who once were alive, nor to fairys nor to demons.’ It usually appears in the form of some animal—‘a black dog dragging a chain, a dusky calf’” (590).

8. Watt is introducing a “shocker” of 1818: *Lovel Castle, or the Rightful Heir Restored, a Gothic Tale; Narrating how a Young Man, the Supposed Son of a Peasant, by a Train of Unparalleled Circumstances, not only Discovers who were his Real Parents, but that they came to Untimely Deaths; with his Adventures in the Haunted Apartment, Discovery of the Fatal Closet, and Appearance of the Ghost of his Murdered Father; Relating, also, how the Murderer was Brought to Justice, with his Confession, and Restoration of the Injured Orphan to his Titles and Estates.*

9. Jauss, contending that “the way in which a literary work satisfies, surpasses, disappoints, or disproves the expectations of its first readers in the historical moment of its appearance obviously gives a criterion for the determination of its aesthetic value,” and calling works that make no changes in the horizon of expectations “‘culinary’ or light reading,” must face the fact that after the “masterwork” changes the horizon, that horizon becomes familiar, and the masterwork or classic itself appears in ‘dangerous proximity with irresistible convincing and enjoyable ‘culinary’ art, and special effort is needed to read them ‘against the grain’ of accustomed experience so that their artistic nature becomes evident again” (18-19).

10. Mr. Hamilton, Fatherless Fanny’s father, enters her room in Pemberton Abbey through a secret door behind a looking glass ([Reeve] 237).

Chapter 4. The Transgeneric Topic, Love

1. Jane reads and quotes selectively. Proverbs 15:18, which follows the Solomon statement—“A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife”—might even at this point have served her well, and later it would have been well for her to recall 15:16: “Better is little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble therewith.” Human and divine love are continuously related—joined or opposed—in interesting counterpoint in the novel.
2. The master telling the governess about his mistress(es) is particularly offensive to Rigby. Somewhat later Leslie Stephen finds the scene like something “taken from the first novel at hand of the early Bulwer school, or a diluted recollection of Byron” (*Cornhill Magazine* [December 1877]: 723–29, qtd. in Allott 418).

**PART II. Strategies of the Text**

1. These geometric metaphors are useful but not rigorously consistent or universally agreed upon. I am using them roughly in the following way: my diagram of the sequential arrangement and reading of the text I am imagining as a straight, flat line from left to right, and I am referring to it by such terms as unilinear, horizontal, temporal, and (for its temporal dimension) diachronic. The recapitulative departure from this straight, forward-moving time-line, such as the supposed ghost of Thornfield calling up the supposed ghost of the red-room (whether this is conceived of as a function of the signal of the text or the action of the reader), I am imagining as disruptive of the straight line, of the diachrony, and I refer to it as synchronic (the “ghosts” lying side by side, occupying the same textual or reader-“moment”) or vertical (the red-room ghost being brought up to and placed, as it were, “above” the Thornfield spot on the time-line) or spatial (i.e., “un-temporal,” violating or disrupting the unilinear, temporal movement forward of text and reader). This last, roughly approximate term is also useful to designate the configuration or the projected shape of the novel at any given moment in the text or the reading. Unlike horizontal and vertical, the spatial has shape, area, enclosure, which indicates a wholeness, completeness, or integrity of the text. The context (cultural as well as literary) I imagine as existing “beyond” the text, just as the reader in the real world, when he or she is not fully engaged in the act of reading, exists in a continuum and different context, operating from a different site that I imagine on “this” side of the textual/reading line; both of these contexts are in a third dimension, while the text and reading lines (spatial as well as temporal or unilinear) are on a plane surface. I try to keep these terms, rough as they are, consistent, which means I often have to use multiple terms—e.g., unilinear, temporal, horizontal—to reinforce or clarify my perceptions.

2. Rabinowitz uses “misreading . . . to refer not to readings that simply skirt the authorial audience [or readings such as Freudian readings that are “doing something else” (175)], but rather to readings that *attempt* to incorporate the strategies of the authorial audience but fail to do so” (42). The Freudian (or feminist or Marxist), I would contend,

.......

229
is not "doing something else," but, coming to a text with a more systematic ideological "conviction" than does the common reader, defines somewhat differently what constitutes an author's "intention" or the text's strategies. Rabinowitz calls the authorial reading "often incomplete" (and seems to mean something closer to "always incomplete"); he insists that we strive, in Eagleton's words, "to show the text as it cannot know itself" (43). I consider this one of the forms of "misreading."

Chapter 5. Hybridization

1. Governess heroines are even more frequently orphans than the run-of-the-mill Victorian heroes and heroines. Besides those already mentioned, for example, Margaret Russell's mother dies when the heroine is twelve; Elizabeth Mathews's Ellinor in Ellinor; or, The Young Governess (1809) is at her mother's deathbed when the novel opens.

2. The moon that awakened Jane plays a sinister role in vampire narratives—and the blood-sucking raises that specter. Early in Polidori's tale, the vampire Ruthven is shot to death by robbers. Before he dies he gives orders that his corpse be "exposed to the first cold ray of the moon that rose after his death" (56). The corpse disappears. Ruthven, very much alive, or seemingly so, reappears later in the tale. Was it the moon that awakened the vampire on the third story of Thornfield Manor?

3. Block gives its date of publication as 1844 and convincingly identifies the author as James Malcolm Rymer, not Thomas Preskett Prest, as claimed by Sir Devendra P. Varma and Margaret L. Carter in the 1970 reprint of the 1847 edition. The title page of Rymer's 1846 novel, Jane Shore, identifies it as "by the Author of 'The Black Monk,' 'Varney the Vampire,' &c.," confirming the earlier, pre-Jane Eyre date of its first publication.

4. Thorslev points out that the Byron fragment had nothing to do with vampirism before Polidori got hold of it and maintains that Praz exaggerates the "fatal" aspects of Byronism, mixing the man and his poetry (9). But readers then and now associate Byron—man and work—no matter how inaccurately, with the darker elements, the "Satanic" school.

Chapter 6. Devastation and Revisitations

1. In the previous chapter of this study a distinction was made between the voice of the child Jane and that of the young adult, who seems to have incorporated some of the lessons of Helen Burns and
Miss Temple, but is not yet as fully mature and fully knowledgeable as the narrator. Here the distinction between the two younger Janes is not relevant, however, since there is no issue of morality or religion involved.

2. The Blackwood's "Letter" cites the "authentic" case in which "Stanjorka, the wife of Heyduke, twenty years old[,] had died after an illness of three days, and had been buried eighteen days. The countenance was florid, and of a high colour. There was blood in the chest and in the heart. The viscera were perfectly sound. The skin was remarkably fresh" (61:432).

3. Florence Dry sees Rochester's story like "George Staunton's, but combined with the elder Staunton's": "The father of George Staunton . . . during service in the West Indies had married the heiress of a wealthy planter . . . his own fortune was that of a younger brother.' This quotation is from [Sir Walter Scott's] The Heart of Midlothian [ch. 34], but it might have come from Jane Eyre" (40). It is not his mother, the West Indian heiress, however, who goes mad, but George's lover, Madge Wildfire, whose "mind became totally alienated" (Dry 40), though not through debauchery.

4. Unbridled passion is indeed associated with insanity in the nineteenth century (see Grudin 147, on the "scientific theory" of "moral madness"), but it is not gender-specific. In males as well as females, lust and insanity—defined, indeed, as the loss of rational control, the submission of reason to the emotions—were often related. The interpolated tale in the eleventh chapter of Pickwick Papers, "A Madman's Manuscript," for example, reads almost like a mirror image of Rochester's story, told by "a male Bertha." He marries a poor girl whose father and brothers force her to the altar, though she loves another. Because he fears passing on insanity to a child, he decides to kill his wife, perhaps by setting his house on fire, but instead drives her mad (leaning over her bed, a razor in hand, just as Lady Glenfallen did in the LeFanu tale) and kills one of her brothers. Now, from the madhouse, he adds to the manuscript,

The unhappy man whose ravings are recorded above, was a melancholy instance of the baneful results of energies misdirected in early life, and excesses prolonged until their consequences could never be repaired. The thoughtless riot, dissipation, and debauchery of his younger days, produced fever and, delirium. The first effects of the latter was the strange delusion . . . that an hereditary madness existed in his family. (Dickens, Pickwick 166)
That Bertha's insanity was hereditary was not a delusion, though it was also brought on "prematurely" by acts "intemperate and unchaste."

5. The upright hero, determined to leave the willful, irreligious heroine, says, "Since I must 'cut off the right hand' better the stroke were past" (Brunton, Discipline 219).

6. Lerner also challenges Gilbert and Gubar's reading, though on other grounds, suggesting that the claim that Bertha expresses what Jane feels or wishes is simply asserted and that "if Bertha represents the very opposite to Jane ... if her presence in the attic symbolizes all that Jane does not feel, if she tears the bridal veil when Jane with her whole being wishes to wear it, if she tries to burn Rochester and this horrifies Jane because she feels no hostility to him, even unconsciously, then the parallels would be just as strong" (291, emphasis added).

7. Nestor is rather unorthodox in finding in Jane a "fear at the threatening aspect of sexuality ... compounded by a certain disgust at its expression," arguing that what appears to be "simple racism" is but Brontë's tendency to "define libidinal drive as Other, or foreign to the self" (59).

8. Viewing Jane Eyre as subversive is not exclusively determined by the conservative religious or political ideology; as suggested earlier, the Radical Examiner seemed to want to co-opt this popular new novel for Godwinism and the left (see above, ch. 1).

9. "Save me, O God; for the waters are come into my soul. / I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing; I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me." The prayerful opening phrase of Psalm 69 is suppressed: young Jane is still apparently unable to pray. In Rachel McCrindell's The English Governess, Clara Neville's fiancé becomes dissipated and irreligious at Cambridge. The epigraph to chapter 3, in which this comes to light, is from Psalms 43:7, which contains some of the same imagery: "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me."

10. The changes of scene, which are also moral stages or stages of growth, in Bakhtin's terms, "chronotopes," are indeed structural elements here but are quite separate from the volume structure: not only are Gateshead and Lowood both in the first volume, but there are no internal or sectional markings within the volume. The eight-year gap between chapters 9 and 10 is not structurally marked, and the move out into "life," to Thornfield and her arrival and first months there, even the advent of Rochester, all take place within that volume. Thornfield takes up half the novel, figuring in all three volumes. Nonetheless
the volume breaks are also structural and are so marked, as the water imagery and its accompanying hope-to-despair movement suggest. This structural counterpoint—the chronotope of romance versus the religious/realist suggestions of the volume-structure—coincides well with the affectively perceived mixed nature of *Jane Eyre* as romance and novel.


12. Gilbert and Gubar, 341 and passim, rightly stress the importance of the red-room experience and the repeated references to it at crucial points in the text, though I believe their reading of it as paradigmatic of the “plot of enclosure and escape” ignores the religious element in the novel, largely by “Freudianizing” it.

Chapter 7. Ideology and the Act of Reading

1. This is another example of later passages qualifying or, as in this instance, responding to earlier ones. This testimony to God’s presence and the immortality of the soul answers the doubting questions Jane had asked herself when speaking with Helen:

“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.”

“And shall I see you again, Helen, when I die?”

“You will come to the same region of happiness: be received by the same mighty, universal Parent, no doubt, dear Jane.”

Again I questioned; but this time only in thought. “Where is that region? does it exist?” (80)

2. Quoting the passage “Human life and human labour were near. I must struggle on; strive to live and bend to toil like the rest” (416), Barry Qualls, his humanist ideology showing, says, “Brontë insists that human aid and communication are vital to Jane’s salvation” (62; see also Gates 86: “Jane . . . [learns] of the interconnectedness of
NOTES TO PAGES 170-72

human life and of the need for dependence and compassion as well as for independence”). Qualls ignores the rejection by her fellowmen that almost immediately follows this passage. Her “salvation” (Brontë surely would not use that term to mean earthly survival) follows her plea to Providence for guidance.

3. Though this is literally the phosphorescent marsh light called by this name, the false light is also metaphorically a misleading, in providentialist terms. The believer must distinguish true leadings from such false ones. Ignis fatuus is elsewhere in Jane Eyre used to suggest the false guidance given us by our passions. Rochester tells Jane that after he put Bertha in Thornfield, “I transformed myself into a Will-o’-the wisp... I pursued wanderings as wild as those of the Marsh-spirit. I sought the Continent... to seek and find a good and intelligent woman” (395). Jane believes “it is madness in all women to let a secret love kindle within them, which, if responded to, must lead, ignis fatuus-like into miry wilds whence there is no extrication” (201). Mary Hays asks whether women’s “capacity [is] only an ignis fatuus since it doesn’t lead to fulfilment” (1:172). Clarissa is in fact bedevilled by false lights: “But I, presumptuous creature! must rely so much upon my own knowledge of the right path!—little apprehending that an ignis fatuus with its false fire... would arise to mislead me! And now, in the midst of fens and quagmires, it plays around and around me, throwing me back again, whenever I think myself in the right track” (Richardson, Clarissa Letter 173, 566).

4. In early capitalist Britain, the conception of a Special Providence was useful for the rich and unscrupulous to sanctify their material prosperity. Thus does Dickens’s Mr. Pecksniff implicitly make use of the concern of Providence for the sparrow:

“It [to offer a four-thousand-pound dowry for his daughter] would sadly pinch and cramp me, my dear friend,” repeated Mr Pecksniff, “but Providence, perhaps I may be permitted to say a special Providence, has blessed my endeavours, and I could guarantee to make the sacrifice.”

A question of philosophy arises here, whether Mr Pecksniff had or had not good reason to say, that he was specially patronised and encouraged in his undertakings. All his life long he had been walking up and down the narrow ways and by-places, with a hook in one hand and a crook in the other, scraping all sorts of valuable odds and ends into his pouch. Now, there being a special Providence in the fall of the sparrow, it follows (so Mr Pecksniff would have reasoned), that there must also be a special Providence in the alighting of the stone, stick, or other substance which is aimed at the sparrow. And Mr Pecksniff’s hook, or crook, having invariably knocked the sparrow on the head and brought him down, that

234
gentleman may have been led to consider himself as specially licensed to bag sparrows, and as being specially seized and possessed of all the birds he had got together. That many undertakings, national as well as individual—but especially the former—are held to be specially brought to a glorious and successful issue, which never could be so regarded on any other process of reasoning, must be clear to all men. (Martin Chuzzlewit 393–94)

Dickens felt compelled to add a footnote to this 1844 passage: “The most credulous reader will scarcely believe that Mr Pecksniff’s reasoning was once set upon as the Author’s.”

5. There is another implicit contrast, that between the Rivers and Reed households, each with two sisters and a brother named John, the one so conflicted, cruel, and profane or religiously perverse, the other so harmonious, loving, and devout.

6. Vineta Colby (159) refers to Mrs. Sherwood’s “semi-fictional biography of a real-life missionary, The Life of Henry Martyn (which Janet Dempster of George Eliot’s ‘Janet’s Repentance’ read with deep interest),” but I have been unable to find a record of such a work, though Mrs. Sherwood did write The History of John Marten, a sequel to the Life of Henry Milner (1844), which may have been confused with Sargent’s Memoir but has no relation that I can see to Martyn. In “Janet’s Repentance,” the title is given as Colby indicates, but no author is named (nor does David Lodge name an author in his note to the text in the Penguin edition, identifying only Martyn). On the other hand, Mrs. Sherwood spent years in India and knew Martyn in Cawn­pore, and her impressions of him are given in the Memoirs, though Sargent cites no published or manuscript sources (288, 302). Valentine Cunningham (Everywhere Spoken Against) identifies the memoir Janet Dempst­er is reading as Sargent’s (xx).

7. Susan VanZanten Gallagher, citing Elisabeth Jay’s The Religion of the Heart: Anglican Evangelicalism and the Nineteenth-Century Novel, points out that nineteenth-century Evangelicalism considered celibacy “somewhat perverse,” a view she finds echoed in “Brontë’s negative depiction of St. John’s rejection of Rosamond and of Eliza Reed’s retirement to a convent” (68). Jane initially thinks St. John’s action “wrong,” or at least unfortunate, but later she “understood, as by inspiration, the nature of his love for Miss Oliver: I agreed with him that it was but a love of the senses . . . ; how he should mistrust its ever conducing permanently to his happiness, or hers” (501–2).

8. Imperialist from 1600 to 1800 refers to adherents of German Empire and later to Napoleon. Its third definition in the OED, “an
advocate of 'imperialism' in British or American politics," dates only from 1899—and all four citations thereafter are favorable! Though colony is, of course, an older term, colonialism as a system or principle first appears in 1886. India was never, strictly speaking, a colony (that is, a territory or country settled by the English) but was instead a "dependency," under the control of Britain (though in Brontë's day only indirectly, through the East India Company).

Chapter 8. Decentering the Narrator

1. St. John’s “&c” replaces these words from the Biblical text: “and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars”; in context not all these words need have been elided. The preceding line, Revelations 21:6, also includes “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.” Rochester as the “Alpha and Omega” was deleted from the initial ending of volume 2, as we have noted, so “idolaters” would have been appropriate from the narrator’s perspective and might have reinforced the novel’s characterization of Jane’s love, and the water of life reinforced its imagery; but the passage is marked dialogically and appropriately as St. John’s utterance, and he would not have access to Jane’s earlier thoughts.

2. Wayne Burns, 307–11, has a hilarious and unsettling Freudian reading of this entire scene.

3. The Clarendon note also cites, I believe mistakenly, a passage in Marsh’s The Deformed: the midnight scream in The Deformed that, Mrs. Gaskell reports, Brontë feared might lead readers to think she had plagiarized from Marsh is not the “Lord Louis! Lord Louis! Lord Louis!” quoted above (see ch. 5), which occurs during the day and involves retribution by lightning. There is another literal “midnight scream” that occurs when the hero, the deformed, is found dead. Brontë seemed to think the “Good God!” exclamation that follows similar to the exclamations of the guests at Thornfield when Mason is bitten and screams.

4. John Reed—the critic, not Jane’s cousin—cites another Scott precedent: “The insane Bertha Mason’s death in the blazing destruction of Thornfield Hall . . . had as its model a similar death of a maniac in a burning tower in Scott’s Ivanhoe” (201).

5. This, too, is territory “occupied” by contemporary fiction; one such instance has also some intriguing verbal resonance. In “The Manor and the Eyrie,” in Harriet Martineau’s Forest and Game-Law Tales (1845–46), the family house having burned down, one of the servants having been blinded and having lost a hand in the fire, the father now
searches for an “eyrie”: “There you shall have a bed of ferns this night as soft as the doe can find for his fawn. Then we will seek some eyrie which God has sheltered for us” (1:91, emphasis added). Besides the echo of Eyre-eyrie and fern-Ferndean, Rochester is frequently referred to as an eagle (most recently on 570). Katherine King called my attention to this passage. Martineau recounts in her Autobiography that she had been “taxed with the authorship” of Jane Eyre, and she herself had believed that it must have been by a friend who knew of her childhood, while Brontë told her, she says, that reading Martineau’s “Household Education” was “like meeting her own fetch—so precisely were the fears and miseries there described the same as her own” (qtd. in Gérin, Brontë 411).

An article entitled “Novel Writing Made Easy” in Chamber’s Edinburgh Journal for 29 August 1846 makes it clear that the wounded hero is not private property and even suggests why, despite the biblical passage, it is his left hand that Rochester loses: while, it says, a hero may be wounded in the arm or leg, “No vital organ must be endangered. Taking a left arm in extreme cases is perhaps allowable; the legs must be kept intact” (129).

6. See above, n. 1.

Afterword: Decentering the Author

1. Of course all the words of the text are that narrator’s, but this study has shown on many occasions how reticent the narrator has been to judge or even clarify young Jane’s views; such reticence is constitutive of Brontë’s providentialist strategy.

2. We may gain further insight into Charlotte Brontë’s view of Jane Eyre and Jane Eyre, in fact, by seeing in Villette a response or corrective to the reception of Jane Eyre, if not to the novel itself:

Jane thirsts for experience, Lucy shirks it. Jane is chastened for her excessive restlessness and self-reliance; Lucy is spurred to action despite her desire to hide. Villette makes untenable the narrow and simplistic understanding of Providentialism that might be inferred from reading Jane Eyre in isolation. The role of Brontë’s Providence [Villette makes clear] is not purely patriarchal, nor does it necessarily reward passivity and social conformity with earthly happiness. Its function is not merely to chasten rebelliousness, to domesticate, as it does for Jane; it also energizes, engages, and socializes, as it does for Lucy, making her more adventurous, making her face reality and the outside world, involving her in life and love—and loss. (Beaty, “Afterword” 480–81)
3. Gaskell's report does not make clear whether Brontë supposes Rochester to be good-natured and grumpy like Francesca's husband. It is clear elsewhere—in Brontë's letter of 14 August 1848 to her publisher's man, W. W. Williams—that she believes Rochester's "nature is like wine of good vintage, time cannot sour but only mellow him. Such at least was the character I meant to portray" (Letters 2:245). She resents comparisons with Anne's Huntingdon in The Tenant of Wildfell Hall, who, she says, is "naturally selfish, sensual, [and] superficial" (2:244); and with Heathcliff, who is "naturally perverse, vindictive, [and] inexorable" (2:245)—and made worse by hard usage. That many readers see the three as resembling each other shows clearly the influence of the conventions of the Gothic hero/villain. The strategy of serial revelation also means the reader's first impressions of Rochester are not entirely favorable, and "good-natured" is scarcely the first quality that leaps to mind when we think of Charlotte Brontë's hero.

4. She was hurt when she heard that her idol, Thackeray, thought the plot of Jane Eyre unoriginal: "The plot of 'Jane Eyre' may be a hackneyed one. Mr. Thackeray remarks that it is familiar to him. But having read comparatively few novels I never chanced to meet with it, and I thought it original" (Letters 2:150). As this study has demonstrated, Thackeray was of course right; this seems another instance of Brontë's "misreading."