

CHARLOTTE BRONTË'S PAINTINGS

Victorian Women and the Visual Arts

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ANYONE WHO HAS READ *Jane Eyre* will remember the scene in which Mr Rochester tells Jane to bring him her portfolio. He sorts carefully through her sketches and paintings, selects three for comment and sweeps the others aside. The pictures he remarks on are visionary products of Jane's imagination, striking in conception but feeble in execution, 'a pale portrait of the thing [she] had conceived'.² She tells Mr Rochester that to paint them, 'was to enjoy one of the keenest pleasures I have ever known'; yet, in each case, 'I had imagined something which I was quite powerless to realize'. Here Jane resembles her creator. When Charlotte Brontë's publishers asked her to illustrate the second edition of *Jane Eyre* herself, in 1848, she replied:

It is not enough to have the artist's eye, one must also have the artist's hand to turn the first gift to practical account. I have, in my day, wasted a certain quantity of Bristol board and drawing-paper, crayons and cakes of colour, but when I examine the contents of my portfolio now, it seems as if during the years it has been lying closed some fairy has changed what I once thought sterling coin into dry leaves, and I feel much inclined to consign the whole collection of drawings to the fire.³

Her reply is not false modesty; it indicates her awareness of the conventional nature of her artistic education. Brontë's portfolio, which I have recently helped to reassemble, has a value unforeseen by Brontë herself. Irrespective of their artistic merit, her paintings are artefacts that not only tell their own tale but modify our view of the Brontë story and of early nineteenth-century amateur art in general.

She is quite right in her assessment of her drawings and paintings, at least in the sense that they are plainly not the equal of her writings produced at the same period. Her drawings are painstaking, competent exercises in conventionality, and when you come across one in an album filled with the

productions of her schoolfellows at Roe Head, as I recently did, Brontë's drawings are not to be distinguished on grounds of quality from the others in the album. She drew as well as a Victorian woman of the middle class was expected to draw. Drawing and painting, like needlework, playing a keyboard instrument and learning French, were among the accomplishments expected of middle-class women of the period. Why, then, should we pay special attention to Brontë's paintings?

The answer, of course, is that she was not one of the ordinary young women of the period, but one of the greatest writers our language has to show. What is fascinating, then, is to see her exercising her talent in two fields, writing and painting, and to observe the remarkable difference in her achievements in these two fields.

The nature of that disparity is immediately clear from a brief glance at a selection of the young Brontë's drawings and paintings. Her work shows great skill in draughtmanship, great diligence and willingness to take pains, but also a stiffness and want of vigour and freshness. There is no lack of talent here, but there is marked lack of life and individuality. These productions look like what they are: dutiful copies, in which the character of the young artist can scarcely be detected because it has been given no opportunity to show itself.

Compare that lifelessness, that want of character, with this passage from Brontë's early writing, produced at the same time:

Miss Vernon sat speechless — She darkly saw or rather felt the end to which all this tended, but all was fever & delirium round her — The Duke spoke again — in a single blunt & almost coarse sentence compressing what yet remained to be said. "If I were a bearded Turk, Caroline, I would take you to my Harem" — His deep voice, as he uttered this — his high-featured face, & dark large eyes, beaming bright with a spark from the depths of Gehenna, struck Caroline Vernon with a thrill of nameless dread — Here he was — the man that Montmorency had described to her — all at once she knew him — Her Guardian was gone — Something terrible sat in his place . . . She grew faint with dread . . . She attempted to rise — this movement produced the effect she had feared, the arm closed round her — Miss Vernon could not resist its strength, a piteous upward look was her only appeal.⁴

This is hardly the type of scene the conventional young Victorian woman would have been expected to produce: a young girl, struggling against the hypnotic sexual power of her guardian, aware for the first time of her own impulses and desires, titillated yet terrified by the experience. Her early writing is a hot-house of illicit relationships and dark crimes that often rival the most lurid of Gothic tales. Brontë is drawing partly on life, partly on her reading, partly on her imagination; and the overall effect is of startling originality and colour. Thus in her writing Brontë was giving herself room to move and develop, room which she consistently denied herself in her pictorial art. No wonder, one might say with the benefit of hindsight, her

drawing and painting came to be so stultified, while her writing developed in ever more exciting directions.

And the disparity between her achievements in the two fields is the more marked when one realises that Brontë thought of herself as a potential painter, not as a budding novelist. It was on the visual arts that the young artist pinned her hopes of making a name for herself; and in those blighted hopes, ironically, lies the key to the disparity between her achievements in the fields of drawing and painting on the one hand, and writing on the other. I propose to examine that disparity, with an eye to tracing some of its origins, and to investigate what it tells us about the Victorian period's attitude to women artists; and further, I want to look briefly at the longer-term effect that Brontë's interest in painting had on her writing.

The conventional and unprofessional nature of women's art education at the time is curiously summarised in one of the dominant visual images in England during the second half of the eighteenth century. It is seen depicted in Joseph Wright's painting of *The Corinthian Maid*, sometimes known as the 'Origin of Painting'. This is one of the many versions deriving from Pliny's account of the invention of the pictorial arts. Pliny wrote that 'all agree that [painting] began with tracing an outline round a man's shadow'.⁵ The Corinthian maid is not named as the originator but appears elsewhere in Pliny as assistant to her father, Butades, a potter of Sicyon. Pliny tells that she was in love with a young man, and when he was about to leave the country, she 'drew in outline on the wall the shadow of his face thrown by a lamp. Her father pressed clay on this and made a relief, which he hardened by exposure to fire with the rest of his pottery'.⁶

Wright's painting of this well-known story was commissioned by the potter Josiah Wedgwood, and as such it celebrates the antique origin of the potter's craft. But for Wright and his contemporaries, the origins not only of clay-modelling, but also of painting and drawing, were seen to be located in this source. This reworking of Pliny's myth in the late eighteenth century is found in numerous versions of the subject illustrated by artists as various as Angelica Kauffmann, James Barry, George Romney, Francesco Bartolozzi and Edward Francis Burney (cousin of the novelist Fanny Burney). A great deal has been written about the iconography of Wright's painting, the appeal of the subject to the period's 'romantic classicism', and its connection with the cultural politics of the period.⁷ Most recently, it has been seen as addressing the problematised relationship between the so-called industrial arts and the professional standards of the Royal Academy,⁸ posited by its first president, Sir Joshua Reynolds, in his *Discourses*, delivered over twenty years until his death in 1792. The Academy became the arbiter of 'High Art', whose judgements were based on recognised canons of good taste and whose

standards were founded on the distinction between genius and mere imitation, such as that suggested by *The Corinthian Maid*. The single issue I want to reinforce here is the nature of the Corinthian maid's invention and the implications this has for the role of the pictorial arts in the lives of middle-class Victorian women.

While the painting may appear to reflect an elevated role for woman as the originator and inventor of painting, the nature of that role is problematic. Although the maid shows initiative, she acts only while her lover is asleep⁹ and her act is powerless to either detain or fully render him. She is learning to draw by tracing the inanimate shadow of a man. In all pictorial versions of the story, it is the outline only that is traced, the outline of a shadow and not the profile itself. Her image is 'a copy of a copy, a trace of a trace, a doubly degraded phantasmal semblance'.¹⁰ Further, the act of tracing is mechanical; the real artist is nature. The Corinthian maid can thus 'be seen to illustrate the primitive, pseudo-creative, reproductive process of imitation that was the domain of nature, women, and the industrial arts, and that Reynolds and the Academy had repudiated'.¹¹ The maid's method is imitative; and according to both Pliny and Reynolds, such copying stifled real invention.¹²

Women in early Victorian England were clearly not expected to become professional artists, any more than they were expected to become surgeons, admirals or clerics. Mrs Ellis, whose books on the character and education of women went through many editions in the nineteenth century, notes that an artist's life is full of difficulties; these, however, did not apply to women, for it was not 'an object of desirable attainment that they should study the art of painting to this extent'.¹³ Yet visual literacy was considered an important female accomplishment, one that enhanced a girl's best qualities and enabled her to find a suitable husband. Few middle- and upper-class girls would not have had some training in art at an early age; but it was to have a secondary role in their lives, to act as an embellishment and an amusement. An art teacher of the period, who subtitled his drawing manual 'Young Ladies' Instructor', wrote that the object of drawing was 'to furnish young [female] persons with varied and innocent amusement, and to aid them in the useful employment of hours not devoted to more important occupations'.¹⁴ Jane Austen's Emma amused herself by drawing 'landscapes and flowers', 'figure-pieces', and especially 'likenesses'.¹⁵ She had tried 'miniatures, half-lengths, whole-lengths, pencil, crayon, and water-colours', but was concerned (we are told) only for her 'reputation for accomplishment'. Hannah More's fashionable Miss Rattle, in the novel *Coelebs In Search of a Wife*, was taken every winter to London and taught 'to paint flowers and shells, and to draw ruins and buildings, and to take views,'¹⁶ as well as varnishing, gilding, japanning, modelling, etching and engraving in mezzotinto and aquatinta. Like Miss Murray in Anne Brontë's *Agnes Grey*, Miss Rattle was only interested in 'such drawing as might produce the greatest show with the

smallest labour',¹⁷ and expected her teacher to finish the composition. Mrs Loudon, in *The Lady's Country Companion*, advocated 'sketching in the open air' as 'a very delightful country amusement, particularly when it can be so managed as to be done with very little apparatus'.¹⁸ Anything more strenuous was out of the question. Art was to be acquired gracefully by women as a domestic accomplishment. Its products were to remain confined to a marginal visual culture, virtually ignored by the Academy and excluded from its schools and exhibitions.¹⁹ Its role was essentially social, signifying one's gentility and taste rather than genius.

Victorian 'High Art' never allotted a place to early amateur art, though its practice was widespread and central to the lives of many young women. In comparison with professional paintings, amateur works often seem small, ephemeral and domestic, at odds with our notion of public art. Galleries and museums have all but ignored them. The Victoria and Albert Museum, which early took an enlightened interest in applied art, involving women, was not opened until 1857. Consequently, few drawings and paintings by Brontë's contemporaries survive. Those that have been preserved are chiefly in private homes, usually in albums like the one I've mentioned, cherished by descendants and often inaccessible to the scholar. Brontë's paintings are no different: they reflect the same female images and preoccupations, the same marginal visual culture, despite her professional aspirations. But because of her later fame as a novelist and because of Mrs Gaskell's poignant biography which unleashed a steady flow of relic-hunters soon after Brontë's death, a large number of drawings and paintings were preserved in public and private collections. I have recently identified and dated 178 such works, though it is probable that almost double this number once existed.

Those that survive show clearly that although sketching from nature was considered an amusing pastime, the basic method of art education advocated in girls' schools during the time of the Brontës was copying from engraved plates, a practice encouraged by the increasingly numerous drawing manuals aimed almost exclusively at women in the early nineteenth century. Titles like B. F. Gandee's *The Artist Or, Young Ladies' Instructor in Ornamental Painting, Drawing, &c. consisting of Lessons in Grecian Painting, Japan Painting, Oriental Tinting, Mezzotinting, Transferring, Inlaying, and Manufacturing Ornamental Articles for Fancy Fairs* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1835) clearly proclaim the imitative and reproductive intent of female art education. G. Brown's *New Treatise on Flower Painting or, Every Lady her own Drawing Master* (London: G. Riley, 3rd ed, 1803) has outline drawings of flowers on one page and coloured versions of the same flowers on the opposite page. The outlines were to be traced or copied and then filled in according to the coloured examples, in much the same way as children's colouring books are organised today. Signs of originality – an unusual brush stroke, a different colour – would be read as failure to imitate correctly.

While I was searching through a pile of these old drawing manuals in the British Museum recently, I came across a fascinating version of the 'Origin of Painting'. This appears to be a previously unknown *inversion* of the Corinthian maid image, printed as frontispiece to *Ackermann's New Drawing Book, Comprising Groups of Figures, Cattle, and other Animals, for the Embellishment of Landscapes*.²⁰ The figures have been reversed and the woman reduced to yet a further level of ineffectiveness. She is now sitting like a flaccid lump, a great baby on her lover's knee, while he, the teacher, traces the natural image her shadow throws on the rock behind. She is no longer doing even the tracing herself: she is the passive – captive it seems – pupil, being shown how to execute even the mechanical technique of tracing. Her teacher's pose, impractical and unlikely as it is, is consciously superior and possessive. He is the creator (with his pan-pipes at his feet) who will reveal the art of transcribing a copy from nature.

And the manual itself reinforced the lessons of the picture. Before the pupil can copy nature itself, she must learn to trace the representations of nature in the pages of this drawing manual. Only 'when the eye has been accustomed to the effect of picturesque scenes upon canvas and the hand has acquired a facility in the mechanical practice', declares the author of this manual, should the pupil turn to nature for her model. Unlike Reynolds, who saw genius as innate and taste as something that might be improved through formal study of the past rather than through slavish copying, the drawing masters who wrote these manuals believed that a universal genius and taste in painting could be acquired by following the correct procedures. Brown, for example, wrote in his manual:

The general taste for painting flowers that prevails, and the great progress that some ladies have made in painting, is a convincing proof, that taste or genius for painting is not confined to the other sex; on the contrary, I am inclined to think, that ladies would make much greater progress than men, were they first taught the proper rudiments.

The problem was that little or no effort was made to teach 'ladies' anything more than the rudiments, and that in the most mechanical way imaginable.

A watercolour wash, copied by Charlotte Brontë when she was thirteen, indicates that she was early initiated into this conventional system of art education even before she went to the girls' boarding school at Roe Head. The original, entitled *Dulwich*, was painted by Sutherland in 1809 and was included as a plate in many early nineteenth-century art manuals. It was common practice for booksellers and publishers, who usually made up the drawing manuals, to recycle such prints and sometimes to ask a particular artist or drawing master to add a commentary. *Dulwich* appears, for example, in the *New Drawing Book of Light and Shadow, in Imitation of Indian Ink*, compiled by the influential London print- and bookseller, Ackermann & Co,

in 1812; and it is likely that Brontë read the accompanying commentary, which recommends that those who wish to improve themselves in 'the art of drawing in water colours' should 'observe with attention the works of the most approved masters . . . Their labours might be studied by the amateur, as the professors study nature'. The final comment here is significant: it recalls the inverted image of the Corinthian maid. The master studies nature; the pupil studies the master. The pupil must begin by copying the works of the master, with all their attendant prejudices of style and form. For the young Princess Victoria this method had a happy result: her obvious ability was nurtured by copying the imaginative illustrations of Richard Westall, who early encouraged her flair for capturing a likeness by having her make little portraits of her family.²¹ The average middle-class woman of the period, however, was forced to rely on mediocre instruction based on the drawing manuals. Brontë's 'Dulwich' was probably executed under the supervision of John Bradley, a local house- and signpainter whom Mr Brontë employed as his children's first art teacher.²² Bradley himself had failed in his aspirations to become a portrait painter and the early Brontë paintings reflect his legacy of following the current practice of mechanical copying.

Francis Leyland, Branwell's friend and biographer, records that for many years Charlotte Brontë persisted in believing 'that the art-faculty consisted of little more than mechanical dexterity, and could be obtained by long study and practice in manipulation'.²³ The habit is described by Lucy Snowe in *Villette*, the results of which are clearly seen in Brontë's copy of a detail from Raphael's *Madonna of the Fish*:

I sat bent over my desk, drawing — that is copying an elaborate line engraving, tediously working up my copy to the finish of the original, for that was my practical notion of art; and, strange to say, I took extreme pleasure in the labour, and could even produce curiously finical Chinese facsimiles of steel or mezzotint plates — things about as valuable as so many achievements in worsted-work, but I thought pretty well of them in those days.²⁴

Thirty years later, F. E. Hulme, the author of *Art Instruction In England*, was to rail against the system of art education practised in Charlotte Brontë's day:

Our fathers and mothers, but chiefly our mothers (for drawing was a mere accomplishment, and the boys were rarely troubled with anything so unpractical) had their weekly lessons in drawing, and very unsatisfactory these lessons were. The system is now almost exploded, but its reform was attended by great difficulties. . . . These difficulties are still to some degree felt, and the old system yet lingers in some ladies' schools. The system is simply this, the blind copying of drawings, often themselves faulty, but in any case as mechanical and senseless an operation as can well be imagined, and of as much value in the acquirement of real art power as the careful copying by one of these ladies of a page of Greek would advance her in the study of that language.²⁵

As a result, very few of Charlotte Brontë's surviving sketches, drawings and paintings show any sign of individuality or character. At least a third of them are copies from contemporary engravings, and there are relatively few works 'from nature', despite a shortage of engravings to copy. What imaginative flourishes there are, are found in the margins of manuscripts or on the pages of printed books owned by the Brontës. These are chiefly rough sketches of heads or animals; all are a far cry from Jane Eyre's three surreal images that aroused the interest of Mr Rochester.

Even the earliest written record we have of Brontë drawing is of her as copyist: in September 1829, she wrote to her father that 'we have spent our time very pleasantly, between reading, working and learning our lessons, which Uncle Fennell has been so kind as to teach us every day. Branwell has taken two sketches from nature, and Emily, Anne, and myself have likewise each of us drawn a piece from some views of the lakes which Mr Fennell brought with him from Westmoreland'.²⁶ Already the eleven-year-old Branwell – later to become a professional portrait painter – is distinguished from his sisters in his early practice of sketching seriously 'from nature'. For his sisters, art was to be taught as an accomplishment, acquired by copying suitable engravings of flowers, landscapes and heads. The views of Westmorland, copied by the Brontës at their uncle's home, are typical of the picturesque plates reproduced by countless young Victorian women, eager to excel in the accomplishment of drawing. Charlotte Brontë's pencil version of Thomas Allom's 'Cockermouth', birthplace of William Wordsworth, is one of several such copies of engravings she made of the English Lake District.

It is not too much to say that Brontë developed a fetish for pictures. She sought them out wherever possible, regardless of their merit. Her friend, Mary Taylor records that 'Whenever an opportunity offered of examining a picture or cut of any kind, she went over it piecemeal, with her eyes close to the paper, looking so long that we used to ask her "what she saw in it." She could always see plenty, and explained it very well.'²⁷ Some of her analyses of contemporary engravings are recorded as reviews in the pages of her miniature magazines, others are woven into her stories. Her sources were the stuff of popular culture – the fashionable Annuals, *The Lady's Magazine*, the illustrated volumes of Byron – and as such her drawings reflect popular taste and conventional artistic attitudes.

There are no imaginative drawings by Charlotte Brontë, apart from her first tiny watercolours, which illustrate her earliest juvenile story. This seems all the more remarkable when one considers her fertile imagination evidenced in the voluminous pages of her early writings on the fictitious kingdoms of Glass Town and Angria. Page after page of her early manuscripts is stamped by a precocious knowledge of Biblical, literary, political and cultural sources, welded together by a variety of narrative voices that

shows astounding imaginative flair. This writing began as childhood play and even in her later manuscripts, written when she was a woman of twenty-three, there is a vivacity and originality that is absent from her paintings.

Take, for example, this lively, satiric sketch by Charlotte of her brother Branwell, whose current enthusiasm for organ music is being mocked in the character of Patrick Benjamin Wiggins. Wiggins is ecstatic about the arrival of John Greenwood, musician and composer, in his neighbourhood, only four miles from Howard (the Angrian equivalent of Haworth):

I positively fell into a fit with joy. He came — I saw him — yes, I remember the moment when he entered the church, walked up to the organ gallery where I was, kicked Sudbury Figgs, who happened to be performing Handel's "And the Glory of the Lord", from the stool, and, assuming it himself, placed his fingers on the keys, his feet on the pedals, and proceeded to electrify us with "I Know that My Redeemer Liveth".

"Then," said I, "this is a god and not a man!" As long as the music sounded in my ears, I dared neither speak, breathe, nor even look up. When it ceased, I glanced furtively at the performer. My heart had previously been ravished by the mere knowledge of his fame and skill, but how resistlessly was it captivated, when I saw in Mr Greenwood a tall man dressed in black, with a pair of shoulders, light complexion and hair inclining to red — my very beau ideal of personal beauty . . . [His sister is mocking not only his behaviour here, but also his physical features.] Instantly I assumed that inverted position which with me is always a mark of highest astonishment, delight and admiration. In other words I clapt my pate to the ground and let my heels fly up with a spring. They happened to hit Mr Sudbury Figgs's chin, as he stood in his usual way, picking his teeth and projecting his under jaw a yard beyond the rest of his countenance. He exclaimed so loud as to attract Mr Greenwood's attention. He turned round and saw me. "What's that fellow playing his mountebank tricks here for?" I heard him say. Before anybody could answer I was at his feet licking the dust under them and crying aloud, "O Greenwood! The greatest, the mightiest, the most famous of men! Doubtless you are ignorant of a nit, the foal of a louse, like me, but I have learnt to know you through the medium of your wonderful works. Suffer the basest of creatures to devote himself utterly to your service, as a shoe-black, a rosiner of fiddlesticks, a greatcoat-carrier, a port-music, in short as a thorough-going toadie."²⁸

There are no equivalent comic sketches among Charlotte Brontë's art works, though Branwell himself produced pages of robust pen-and-ink drawings.

Nor do any of her paintings approximate the nightmare quality of her fragmentary writing produced when she returned as a teacher to Roe Head school, frustrated in her artistic ambitions and forced to lead the life of a drudge. Her writing here recalls Fuseli's powerful image of sexual fantasy, *The Nightmare* (Detroit Institute of Arts, 1781), rather than any of her own conventional paintings:

The toil of the day, succeeded by this moment of divine leisure, had acted on me like opium and was coiling about me a disturbed but fascinating spell, such as I never felt before. What I imagined grew morbidly vivid. I remember I quite seemed to see, with my bodily eyes . . . the tall man washing his bloody hands in a basin and the dark beauty standing by with a light remained pictured on my visual eye with irksome and alarming distinctness. I grew frightened at the vivid glow of the candle, at the reality of the lady's erect and symmetrical figure, of her spirited and handsome face, of her anxious eye watching Brandon's and seeking out its meaning, diving for its real expression through the semblance of severity that habit and suffering had given to his stern aspect.

I felt confounded and annoyed. I scarcely knew by what. At last I became aware of a feeling like a heavy weight laid across me. I knew I was wide awake and that it was dark, and that, moreover, the ladies were now come into the room to get their curl-papers. They perceived me lying on the bed and I heard them talking about me. I wanted to speak, to rise. It was impossible. I felt that this was a frightful predicament, that it would not do. The weight pressed me as if some huge animal had flung itself across me. A horrid apprehension quickened every pulse I had. 'I must get up', I thought, and I did so with a start. I have had enough of morbidly vivid realizations. Every advantage has its corresponding disadvantage. Tea's ready. Miss Wooler is impatient.²⁹

At this time the nature of her dreams and her writing becomes a burden, part of a secret, sinful world that she is ashamed of: she calls it her 'world below'. But it is also a world she can control and feel secure in, one in which her talents can develop uninhibited by social convention. The sexual nature of her visions, such as the one just quoted, is clear enough, for all their veiling in imagery such as the lady holding the candle while the man washes his bloody hands in a basin, or the speaker pressed to her bed by the animal weight. Occasionally the unconventional nature of the stories spills over into her drawing: a portrait of Byron or Lady Blessington, copied from a magazine, is renamed as an Angrian hero or heroine; but, generally speaking, the idealised visual images betray no sign of a secret imaginative underworld. The early writings are part of a private created realm, whereas the paintings reflect Brontë's early bid to establish a public identity as a female artist.

The conventional art education which was so restricting and which seemed so misguided, even to enlightened contemporary art theoreticians such as Sir Henry Cole,³⁰ was Brontë's chosen route to a profession. Mrs Gaskell was the first to record her early ambition to become an artist. She remarked on 'how strong a yearning the whole family had towards the art of drawing'.³¹ Brontë's letters and early writings, and the sheer number of surviving illustrations confirm that her ambitions in painting exceeded Mrs

Ellis's refined and lady-like parameters. 'So strong was this intention [to become a painter], that she could scarcely be convinced that it was not her true vocation', recorded Francis Leyland.³² Only later in life did she realise that she lacked the skill she discerned in others. Until then, she applied herself to the task of acquiring an artistic training as best she could and with remarkable determination. She adhered rigidly in art to accepted female subjects and practice. Neither she nor her family saw any contradiction at this time between this essentially marginal culture and her hopes of a career.

She was further encouraged in her belief that she should become a painter by the acceptance of two of her drawings for exhibition in Leeds, when she was eighteen. We have always known that the Brontë family attended the summer exhibition of The Royal Northern Society for the Encouragement of the Fine Arts in 1834; but I have only just discovered Brontë's name amongst the entries in the catalogue, preserved in the archives of the Leeds Public Library. Until this time, almost all her experience of important paintings had been in the form of black-and-white engravings.³³ She would have known of this annual exhibition from the time she began her earliest drawings, since catalogues show that her teacher, John Bradley, regularly exhibited works in the 1820s, including several views of Bolton Abbey.³⁴ Yet exhibitions were a luxury and the excitement for the Brontës of simply attending such an exhibition should not be underestimated. The works of local artists were exhibited amongst those of established painters and sculptors from London and elsewhere. Names like Richard Westall, William Turner, William Mulready and Sir Thomas Lawrence had appeared in the catalogues of previous years. In 1834, Charlotte Brontë chose to submit two of her detailed pencil copies of engravings, 'Bolton Abbey' and 'Kirkstall Abbey', famous views of two local landmarks. There were well over four hundred entries and her two contributions were clearly marked for sale in the catalogue. To see her name listed only eight down from that of William Turner, whose works she had copied,³⁵ must have provided encouragement to persevere with her painstaking apprenticeship.

If the exhibition marks the highpoint of her artistic hopes, it also indicates the beginning of her disillusionment with her artistic practice. Her drawings were a clear contrast to other works at the exhibition: 'Bolton Abbey' was a copy of an engraving of Turner's painting of the same name, 'a trace of a trace'. As far as I can tell, other items listed in the exhibition catalogue, chiefly submitted by men, were original works. Nor was Brontë unaware of the professional training required for men to gain entry to the Academy schools. At great expense, given his limited means, her father employed William Robinson as a tutor for Branwell, soon after the exhibition in which Robinson had also exhibited. Robinson, a portrait painter whose career was already associated with such illustrious names as Sir Thomas Lawrence and Fuseli, gave several lessons at the parsonage and the following year taught

Branwell at his studio in Leeds. There is no evidence that Charlotte attended any of these art lessons, though she was the Brontë who had exhibited with Robinson.

Her writing at this time shows only an amused tolerance of Branwell's enthusiasm for oil painting and his acquisition of canvases and mechanical art equipment, symbols of a professional status she was denied. Patrick Benjamin Wiggins reappears in the juvenilia as a 'colour-grinder' in the studio of the great Sir Edward de Lisle, who was modelled on Reynolds. As an apprentice artist, Brontë writes, Wiggins 'wasn't satisfied with being a sign-painter at Howard'; he must become a painter to whom even Claude Lorrain must yield.³⁶ From 1834 on, Brontë's stories feature the Angrian artist 'Sir William Etty, R.A.', based on the successful local Yorkshire painter of the same name, whose works they knew from such books as *The Sacred Annual*.³⁷ Descriptions of the paraphernalia of the fictional Etty's studio, probably based on a contemporary engraving,³⁸ also owe much to Brontë's experience of her brother's very different preparations for his artistic career:

Numerous pictures, some in heavy gilt frames, others as yet unfinished, leant against the walls; several busts, plaster casts, etc., stood on stands or on the table amidst a miscellaneous heap of loose sketches, engravings, crayons, colour boxes, gilt and morocco-bound tomes, etc., etc. In one corner a lay figure spread its arms abroad. In another stood a large camera lucida. The artist himself stood at his easel busily engaged on a large picture which, though yet incomplete, seemed from the freshness and vivid truth of its colouring absolutely to start from the inanimate canvas on which it was portrayed.³⁹

All the professional artists in the Brontë juvenilia are male; the many women who paint are amateurs, copying fruit and flowers from botanical books, making pencil sketches of their gardens and watercolours of their family and friends.⁴⁰ Even in her private world, Brontë shows she was keenly aware of the gendered nature of artistic discourse and, like her heroines, she was determined to remain within its parameters, possibly as a miniaturist or painter of flowers. In economic terms, of course, she had little choice. There was no possibility that Mr Brontë could afford to pay for two children to have private art lessons, to enter the Academy schools or be provided with a studio in Bradford, as Branwell later was. Charlotte Brontë clearly had to resign herself to drawing in miniature with pencil and watercolour. It was with controlled bitterness that she wrote to her friend in mid 1835, telling of her resolution to become a teacher:

human affairs are mutable, and human resolutions must bend to the course of events — We are all about to divide, break up, separate, Emily is going to school, Branwell is going to London, and I am going to be a Governess. This

last determination I formed myself, knowing that I should have to take the step sometime . . . and knowing also that Papa would have enough to do with his limited income should Branwell be placed at the Royal Academy . . . I am sad, very sad at the thoughts of leaving home but Duty — Necessity — these are stern mistresses who will not be disobeyed.⁴¹

From this time on, the visual arts became for Brontë what they were for her sister Anne and for so many of her female contemporaries — an accomplishment, practised to amuse, to impress and to improve her chances of employment as a governess. Her knowledge and experience, however, were not wasted. By the time she wrote *The Professor*, she was aware of the limitations of her talent and her redundant artistic training. Her experience in the visual arts laid the foundation for her later artistic principles in writing: it taught her that the conscious study of art (or in this case, its methodology), should take second place to 'Truth and Nature'. When her publishers criticised the satirical portraits of the clergy in the opening of *Shirley*, Brontë wrote:

You both of you dwell too much on what you regard as the *artistic* treatment of a subject. Say what you will — gentlemen — say it as ably as you will — Truth is better than Art. Burns' songs are better than Bulwer's Epics. Thackeray's rude, careless sketches are preferable to thousands of carefully finished paintings. Ignorant as I am, I dare to hold and maintain that doctrine.⁴²

Brontë was not, of course, ignorant. Bitter experience in following a rigorous prescribed training in the 'treatment of a subject' had failed to enable her to capture her visions in paint. It had taught her that artistic conventions, whether in the visual arts or in writing, are no substitute for what she refers to as 'Truth', the recreation of a subject from life rather than from another's copy of a copy.

Both her early writing and her later novels embody Brontë's experience and knowledge of the visual arts in ways that can only be hinted at briefly here. The juvenilia are crammed with references to the visual arts — lists of painters and sculptors, well-known paintings in the Louvre, the relative merits of Gothic and palladian architecture — and the later stories and novels are structured on Brontë's experience of painting. *Jane Eyre's* experience, for example, documents Brontë's gradual growth towards her perception of artistic truth: Jane's childhood response to Bewick's woodcuts, her picturesque copies at Lowood school, her prescient images examined at Thornfield, and her final 'views from nature', all chart Jane Eyre's state of mind at crucial stages of her life and mark her gradual rejection of social conventions.

Brontë's analysis and copying of popular picturesque scenes taught her a particular way of representing reality that was also translated into her

writing. The 'classic scenery' surrounding Percy Hall in her early novelette, 'High Life In Verdopolis', is described in terms that recall the picturesque scenes she so often copied, such as the two drawings she exhibited, 'Bolton Abbey' and 'Kirkstall Abbey'. Her vocabulary is contrived in pictorial terms: 'The picture of the splendid and venerable pile of buildings that constitute the hall, the slopes of sunny verdure that surround it, the noble trees, principally elms of the grandest dimensions, that cover those slopes with trembling gloom, interlaced by continual bursts of light'. All the paraphernalia of the picturesque is evoked here, with the elm trees casting 'their mighty morning shadows', 'their trunks and roots' surrounded by wildflowers, the 'many gables all grey and time honoured', the 'picturesque stacks of chimneys', 'an horizon of blue, misty hills and a nearer prospect of many groups of deer [that] completed the magnificent panorama now presented to my eyes'.⁴³

In the novel *Shirley*, too, Caroline Helstone and Shirley Keeldar describe their surroundings on Nunnely Common in terms which recall both Gilpin's theory of picturesque landscape, illustrated so assiduously in the pages of the *Annals*, and Brontë's own drawing of 'The Cross of Rivaulx'. Shirley points out 'a dell; a deep, hollow cup, lined with turf as green and short as the sod of this Common; the very oldest of the trees, gnarled mighty oaks, crowd about the brink of this dell: in the bottom lie the ruins of a nunnery'.⁴⁴ They agree to take their pencils and sketchbooks there, since Caroline knows 'groups of trees that ravish the eye with their perfect, picture-like effects: rude oak, delicate birch, glossy beech, clustered in contrast; and ash trees stately as Saul, standing isolated, and superannuated wood-giants clad in bright shrouds of ivy'. Many of the contemporary drawing manuals are devoted solely to copying trees, and they all point out the importance (as Caroline does here) of using different varieties in contrast in a composition.⁴⁵

Other picturesque scenes recall Brontë's copies of the Finden brothers' engravings of landscapes in Byron's poetry and travels (such as 'Santa Maura', and 'Geneva'). This view of 'the distant prospect' can be found throughout her early writing, described in the contrived language and shape of a picturesque painting. The eye moves progressively from foreground, to middle ground, to the far distance — all obscured in a misty Claudian haze: Warner was tempted to stop in order to reconnoitre the scenery by which he was surrounded. The low acclivity that formed his station sloped into a small hollow, a sequestered and solitary spot which formerly had been entirely shut from sight by the intervening boughs of a tall chestnut. It was now hewn down and its trunk, branches and withering leaves lay prostrate: a stately ruin on the hill they had once shadowed. The gleam of a little lake was visible at the bottom of the hollow, its tiny billows glittering in the moonlight and its banks overhung by a single tree whose boughs, strangely contorted by the wind, seemed as they waved and writhed above the water almost instinct

with life. At its foot lay a broken seat, green with moss and weather stains. Beyond this glen and the hillocks that bounded it, a wide plain stretched, of that pastoral character which is so frequent in Wellington's Land. There was a proud castellated mansion, seemingly the seat of some dominant aristocrat, embosomed in its hereditary woods, parks and lawns. Fields, orchards, cottages and a small village, distinguishable in the extreme background by its many twinkling lights, filled up the picture. All was softened and obscured by the shower of silvery dimness which the union of mist and moonlight diffused over all visible objects.⁴⁶

The conventional art lessons at Roe Head were crucial in instilling in Charlotte Brontë a 'learned' way of seeing and the many prints copied from books like Allom's *Picturesque Rambles in Westmorland, Cumberland, Durham and Northumberland* (London: Fisher, 1832) and Finden's *Illustrations of the Life and Works of Lord Byron* (London: John Murray, 1833), reinforced this tendency to see natural objects and surroundings in terms of pictures.

There is often a direct relationship between Brontë's early stories and her drawings. A comparison between the two reveals that, for her, the composition of word and visual image went hand in hand. Although in most cases she had already formed her initial conception of her heroines, Brontë's careful copies of Finden's plates of Byronic heroines allowed her to modify her literary pictures to conform more closely with the originals. Her copy of William Finden's *Countess of Jersey*, which she renamed 'English Lady' on 15 October 1834, closely resembles her descriptions of her heroine Marian Hume, with her 'small delicate features', brilliantly clear eyes, 'beautiful nutty curls and frail-looking form'.⁴⁷ It is interesting to note that the description of Marian that is usually associated with the engraving, recording the long chain that hangs below her waist and the small crescent of pearls,⁴⁸ actually appears two years earlier than Brontë's copy (August 1832), suggesting either that Brontë saw and wrote about the engraving soon after it was published or that she chose to copy it because it confirmed her earlier image of Marian Hume. Charlotte Brontë's copy of Finden's *The Maid of Saragoza*, representing her heroine Mina Laury, however, was probably made at the same time as her appearance as Zamorna's mistress in 'High Life In Verdopolis'. As in the original, Mina has 'a profusion of dark hair and a complexion of the richest brunette, which her dress of black satin with gold chain, cross and earrings served well to set off'.⁴⁹ Brontë, however, has modified both these images in her drawing, exchanging fashionable side ringlets for the earrings and adding features more reminiscent of the socialites in *Heath's Book of Beauty* than of Byron's Italian peasant girl.

This association between the pictorial image and the written text in the juvenilia is translated into Brontë's mature writing in a variety of ways. Critics remark especially on her close observation of detail in character and

scene, her sensitivity to colour revealed in description and imagery, her fondness for the vignette, her method of analysing a scene as if it were a painting, and her tendency to structure a novel as if it were a portfolio of art works ('Three — nay four pictures line the four-walled cell where are stored for me the Records of the Past', says William Crimsworth as he embarks on an analysis of his life in *The Professor*).⁵⁰ George Lewes praised *Jane Eyre* for its word-painting: 'The pictures stand out distinctly before you: they *are* pictures, and not mere bits of "fine writing"'. The writer is evidently painting by words a picture that she has in her mind, not "making up" from vague remembrances, and with the consecrated phrases of "poetical prose".⁵¹

Victorian audiences appreciated visual description. They liked to *see* their fiction. It is hard for us now — particularly with our conditioning towards the psychological aspects of writing — to recapture this sense of the literary text as a visual field. Yet Brontë's novels, like those of her early mentor Scott, cater to a prevailing taste for pictorialism. Her literary portraits, with their emphasis on description of physical appearances, betray her bias towards a physiognomical reading of character which was clearly fostered by her detailed pencil studies of eyes, noses and heads.⁵² Furthermore, Brontë uses her 'wordpainting'⁵³ to reinforce her views about art, knowing that she is addressing an audience familiar with a painterly vocabulary and language.

In *The Professor*, William Crimsworth exclaims 'Let the idealists—the dreamers about earthly angels and human flowers, just look here, while I open my portfolio and shew them a sketch or two, pencilled after nature'.⁵⁴ He produces pictures of real people, warts and all. The classical heads, the highly coloured beautiful Byronic heroines have gone, the delicately chiselled sketches of young men and the minute copies of picturesque engravings are a thing of the past. Crimsworth has no 'gentle virgin head, circled with a halo, some sweet personification of innocence, clasping the dove of peace to her bosom' in his portfolio.

Brontë recalls the illusory delight of her early artistic productions, when, in her misery at Lowood, *Jane Eyre* feasts on 'the spectacle of ideal drawings . . . freely pencilled houses and trees, picturesque rocks and ruins, Cuyp-like groups of cattle, sweet paintings of butterflies hovering over unblown roses, or birds picking at ripe cherries, of wrens' nests enclosing pearl-like eggs, wreathed about with young ivy sprays';⁵⁵ yet both she and Lucy Snowe learn to reject the social conceptions of the beautiful and the picturesque. Rochester thrusts aside Jane's early 'ideal drawings' and she finds pleasure, instead, in sketching one of her pupils and 'sundry views from nature, taken in the Vale of Morton and on the surrounding moors'.⁵⁶

In *Villette*, Brontë uses her experience of the visual arts to expose the hypocrisy of society's attitude to women, and to underscore her belief that the first duty of an Author is 'a faithful allegiance to Truth and Nature'.⁵⁷ With typical comic irony, so often overlooked in Brontë's writing but found,

as we've seen, throughout the juvenilia, Lucy undermines the idealism of a Rubenesque painting of a voluptuous Cleopatra in the Villette Art Gallery:

It represented a woman, considerably larger, I thought, than the life. I calculated that this lady, put into a scale of magnitude suitable for the reception of a commodity of bulk, would infallibly turn from fourteen to sixteen stone. She was, indeed, extremely well fed; very much butcher's meat — to say nothing of bread, vegetables, and liquids — must she have consumed to attain that breadth and height, that wealth of muscle, that affluence of flesh. She lay half-reclined on a couch: why, it would be difficult to say; broad daylight blazed round her; she appeared in hearty health, strong enough to do the work of two plain cooks; she could not plead a weak spine; she ought to have been standing, or at least sitting bolt upright. She had no business to lounge away the noon on a sofa. She ought likewise to have worn decent garments; a gown covering her properly, which was not the case: out of abundance of material — seven-and-twenty yards, I should say, of drapery — she managed to make inefficient raiment. Then, for the wretched untidiness surrounding her, there could be no excuse. Pots and pans — perhaps I ought to say vases and goblets — were rolled here and there on the foreground; a perfect rubbish of flowers was mixed amongst them, and an absurd and disorderly mass of curtain upholstery smothered the couch and cumbered the floor. On referring to the catalogue, I found that this notable production bore the name "Cleopatra." . . . it was on the whole an enormous piece of claptrap.⁵⁸

Lucy's apparent *naïveté* is deceptive. Her mock-ignorance and homeliness reduce the convention of female nudes in painting to absurdity: she cannot imagine why such a hearty specimen should need to lounge away the noon on a sofa. Her plea for realism is an attack on the aesthetic ideal of women articulated in establishment art. This same ideal of Cleopatra would previously have fired the imagination of the creator of Angrian drama; now she undercuts such blatant eroticism masking itself as 'High Art'. Lucy Snowe concludes: 'It seemed to me that an original and good picture was just as scarce as an original and good book; nor did I, in the end, tremble to say to myself, standing before certain *chef d'œuvres* bearing great names, "These are not a whit like nature. Nature's daylight never had that colour; never was made so turbid, either by storm or cloud, as it is laid out there, under a sky of indigo: and that indigo is not ether; and those dark weeds plastered upon it are not trees."' Brontë's heroes and heroines — William Crimsworth, Jane Eyre, Shirley Keeldar and Lucy Snowe — all demand that the painter should work 'after nature', that the novelist should 'cherish the plain truth', should look 'life in its iron face', or endeavour to bring the thoughts and feelings of the heart 'into the safe fold of common sense'.⁵⁹

Recalling her experience in painting, Brontë wrote defiantly to her publisher:

Unless I have something of my own to say, and a way of my own to say it in, I have no business to publish. Unless I can look beyond the greatest Masters, and study Nature herself, I have no right to paint. Unless I can have the courage to use the language of Truth in preference to the jargon of Conventionality, I ought to be silent.⁶⁰

It is no wonder that she refused to illustrate her own books. Her rigid artistic training had left her with no skill in representing life 'from nature' in pictorial form. Like the Corinthian maid she had learnt only to imitate, and was 'powerless to realize' her view of 'Truth' in paint.⁶¹ The drawings and paintings she 'once thought sterling coin', now appeared to her as simply 'dry leaves', 'the jargon of Conventionality'; whereas her early writing, conceived as juvenile play and the secret repository of adolescent dreams, thrived in silent opposition to the conventional norms of society and eventually attained 'the power of speaking the language of conviction in the accents of persuasion'. Paradoxically, her secret world became public, and her carefully acquired public persona as female visual artist has been ignored until now. Her drawings and paintings remain as evidence, limited and stereotyped as it is, of the training of her visual imagination. They offer us yet another window onto the fascinating story of the Brontës and onto the lives of middle-class Victorian women.

NOTES

- 1 The information in this lecture is based on my research for *The Art of the Brontës* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: forthcoming), written in collaboration with Jane Sellars and funded by the Australian Academy of the Humanities and The Brontë Society. The book is to accompany an International Exhibition of Brontë Art, scheduled to begin in 1995.
- 2 Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, eds, Jane Jack and Margaret Smith, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), p 153.
- 3 Charlotte Brontë to W. S. Williams, 11 March 1848, eds, Thomas James Wise and John Alexander Symington, *The Brontës: Their Lives, Friendships and Correspondence*, 4 vols (Oxford: Basil Blackwell for the Shakespeare Head Press, 1933), vol 2, p 197.
- 4 Charlotte Brontë, *Five Novelettes*, ed., Winifred Gérin (London: Folio Press, 1971), pp 352–53.
- 5 H. Rackham, trans, *Pliny: Natural History*, 10 vols (London: Heinemann, and Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University press, 1961), vol 9, p 271.
- 6 *Ibid*, p 373.
- 7 See especially Robert Rosenblum, 'The Origin of Painting: A Problem in the Iconography of Romantic Classicism', *Art Bulletin* 39 (December 1957), 279–90.
- 8 Ann Bermingham, 'The Origin of Painting and the Ends of Art: Wright of

- Derby's "Corinthian Maid", in John Barrell, ed *Painting and The Politics of Culture: New Essays on British Art 1700–1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 135–64.
- 9 The sleeping lover, as Robert Rosenblum points out, is a detail found not in Pliny but in a second version of the story by Athenagoras (Birmingham, 'The Origin of Painting', p 281, n 19).
 - 10 Birmingham, 'The Origin of Painting', p 154.
 - 11 Ibid.
 - 12 Reynolds warns the student against 'the drudgery of copying' as a 'mechanical practice'; he says in Discourse 2: 'I consider general copying as a delusive kind of industry. . . those powers of invention and composition which ought particularly to be called out and put in action, lie torpid, and lose their energy for want of exercise' (Joshua Reynolds, *Discourses on Art*, ed Robert R. Wark, California: Huntington Library, 1959, p 29).
 - 13 Mrs Ellis, *The Daughters of England, Their Position In Society, Character and Responsibilities* (London, 1845), p 112.
 - 14 B. F. Gandee, *The Artist Or, Young Ladies' Instructor in Ornamental Painting, Drawing, &c.* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1835), preface.
 - 15 Jane Austen, *Emma*, ed James Kinsley and David Lodge, World's Classics Series (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p 38–9.
 - 16 Hannah More, *Coelebs In Search of a Wife*, (London: T. Cadell & W. Davies, 1808), vol 1, p 333.
 - 17 Anne Brontë, *Agnes Grey*, ed Hilda Marsden and Robert Inglesfield (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p 67.
 - 18 Mrs Loudon, *The Lady's Country Companion; or, How to enjoy a country Life Rationally* (London: Longman, Brown, Green & Longmans, 1845), p 371.
 - 19 See especially Charlotte Yeldham, *Women Artists in Nineteenth-Century France and England: Their Art Education, Exhibition Opportunities and membership in Exhibiting Societies and Academies, with an Assessment of the Subject Matter of their Work and Summary Biographies*, 2 vols (New York, 1984).
 - 20 Designed and Engraved by J. F. Manskirsh' (London: R. Ackermann, 1808).
 - 21 See Marina Warner, *Queen Victoria's Sketchbook* (London: Macmillan, 1979).
 - 22 Letter from William Dearden to the *Bradford Observer*, 27 June 1861; see also the *Keighley News*, 27 February 1965.
 - 23 Francis A. Leyland, *The Brontë Family With Special Reference to Patrick Branwell Brontë*, 2 vols (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1886), vol 1, pp 124, 139.
 - 24 Charlotte Brontë, *Villette*, ed Herbert Rosengarten and Margaret Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), p 577. As the editors point out (p 745), the distinction here is slightly unclear, since mezzotint engravings may be produced on either steel or copper plates.
 - 25 F. Edward Hulme, *Art Instruction In England* (London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1882), p 6.
 - 26 Wise and Symington, eds, *The Brontës: Their Lives, Friendships and Correspondence*, vol 1, p 82.

- 27 Ibid, p 90.
- 28 Christine Alexander, ed., *An Edition of the Early Writings of Charlotte Brontë*, 2 vols (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987–91), vol 2 (part 2), p 251–2.
- 29 Christine Alexander, 'Charlotte Brontë at Roe Head', in *Jane Eyre* (Norton Critical Edition, 2nd ed.), ed Richard J. Dunn (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1987), p 415–6.
- 30 Sir Henry Cole (1808–82), artist, editor and driving force of the London Exhibitions of 1851 and 1862, was virtually the founder of the Victoria and Albert Museum. In even his earliest publications, he stressed the importance of understanding nature rather than mechanical copying in art: 'The desire to aid increasing numbers, to enrich themselves with the powers of seeing and appreciating the beauties which nature displays to the eye, rather than of teaching the rules or practice of art, is the object of this little work', Introduction to *First Exercises for Children in Light, Shade, and Colour, with numerous illustrations. Being a supplement to 'Drawing for Young Children'* (London: Charles Knight & Co, 1840).
- 31 Elizabeth Gaskell, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, 3rd ed. 'revised and corrected', 2 vols (London: Smith, Elder, 1857), vol 1, p 96.
- 32 Leyland, *The Brontë Family With Special Reference to Patrick Branwell Brontë*, vol 1, p 127.
- 33 Brontë had encountered some original paintings at The Red House, Gomersal, the home of her schoolfriend Mary Taylor, whose father (the model for Hiram Yorke in *Shirley*), a cloth-manufacturer, collected paintings, art-albums and books on his business travels to the Continent. One painting in particular, *Eruzione del Vesuvio*, by an eighteenth-century Italian painter, which still hangs in the Taylor's old home, made a lasting impression on her: see Charlotte Brontë, *Shirley*, ed Herbert Rosengarten and Margaret Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), p 164.
- 34 Namely, 'North East View of Bolton Abbey, Evening' (1823), and 'South-west view of Bolton Abbey' (1825): catalogues of *The Works Of British Artists, In The Gallery of The Royal Northern Society, for the Encouragement of the Fine Arts*, Leeds Public Library.
- 35 *A Catalogue Of The Works of British Artists, In The Gallery Of The Royal Northern Society For The Encouragement of the Arts, 1834* (Leeds: printed by R. Perring, Intelligencer Office, Commercial Street, 1834), p 24.
- 36 Alexander, ed *An Edition of the Early Writings of Charlotte Brontë*, vol 2 (part 2), p 250.
- 37 A hand-coloured lithograph of William Etty's painting 'Christ appearing to Mary at the Tomb' appears as plate 11 in Robert Montgomery, *The Sacred Annual* (London: John Turrill, 1834), from which Charlotte Brontë made a watercolour copy of the plate by A. B. Clayton, 'The Atheist Viewing the dead body of his Wife.'
- 38 Brontë saw, for example, J. Knight's painting of 'The Painter Puzzled', engraved by H. C. Shenton for the *Forget Me Not* of 1831, which depicts the artist in his studio. Charlotte, Branwell and Emily Brontë all copied plates from this Annual: see Christine Alexander, 'That Kingdom of Gloom: Charlotte Brontë, the Annuals, and the Gothic', *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 47 (March 1993), no. 4.

- 39 Alexander, ed., *An Edition of the Early Writings of Charlotte Brontë*, vol 2 (part 1), p 327.
- 40 See, for example, *ibid*, p 318.
- 41 Wise and Symington, eds, *The Brontës: Their Lives, Friendships and Correspondence*, vol 1, p 129.
- 42 *Ibid*, vol 2, p 319.
- 43 Alexander, ed., *An Edition of The Early Writings of Charlotte Brontë*, vol 2 (part 2), p 36.
- 44 Charlotte Brontë, *Shirley*, p 238.
- 45 The Brontës' surviving copy of William De la Motte's *Characters of Trees* (London: 'published by Wm De la Motte, Professor of Drawing at the Royal Military College, Sandhurst', 1832), preserved at the Brontë Parsonage Museum, Haworth, includes plates of a variety of British trees and is typical of these drawing manuals.
- 46 Alexander, ed., *An Edition of The Early Writings of Charlotte Brontë*, vol 2 (part 2), p 51.
- 47 *Ibid*, p 91.
- 48 *Ibid*, vol 1, p 339.
- 49 *Ibid*, vol 2 (part 2), p 53.
- 50 Charlotte Brontë, *The Professor*, ed., Margaret Smith and Herbert Rosengarten (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p 55.
- 51 From an unsigned review in *Fraser's Magazine* (December 1847), in Miriam Allott, ed, *Charlotte Brontë: 'Jane Eyre' and 'Villette'*, Casebook Series (London: Macmillan, 1973), p 55.
- 52 Brontë's interest in the pseudo-sciences of physiognomy and phrenology is examined in Wilfred M. Sensema, 'Charlotte Brontë's Use of Physiognomy and Phrenology', *Papers of the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts, and Letters* 38 (1957), pp 475–83, and Ian Jack, 'Physiognomy, Phrenology and Characterisation in the Novels of Charlotte Brontë', *Brontë Society Transactions* (1970) vol 15, part 80, pp 377–91. Neither of these studies, however, makes any connection between her artistic practice and her habit of 'reading' character according to physical appearance.
- 53 Gerard Manley Hopkins told Robert Bridges that 'Wordpainting is, in the verbal arts, the great success of our day' (quoted in Hugh Witemeyer, *George Eliot and the Visual Arts*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979, p 1).
- 54 Charlotte Brontë, *The Professor*, p 97.
- 55 Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, p 87.
- 56 *Ibid*, p 471.
- 57 Charlotte Brontë to W. S. Williams, 14 August 1848, in Wise and Symington, eds, *The Brontës: Their Lives, Friendships and Correspondence*, vol 2, p 243.
- 58 Charlotte Brontë, *Villette*, p 284–5.
- 59 Charlotte Brontë, *The Professor*, p 97; *Jane Eyre*, p 200.
- 60 Charlotte Brontë to W. S. Williams, [September 1848], in Wise and Symington, eds, *The Brontës: Their Lives, Friendships and Correspondence*, vol 2, p 255.
- 61 Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, p 154.