

Envy and Jealousy in the Novels of the Brontës:  
A Synoptic Discernment

by

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## Preface

Those of us who love the Brontës would be hard-pressed to explain (to people who have never read them) what makes their novels so compelling. If we say, “You can’t put them down!” they could come back with, “You mean like John Grisham?” We would surely insult their dignity if we replied, “Oh, no, they’re far superior to anything on today’s best seller list!” The only way we could avoid such condescension would be to convince them to read the novels for themselves, and then they would appreciate them first-hand and know what we are talking about. Once again, however, we would sound patronizing, and we might have to conclude that our love for the Brontës cannot be adequately expressed in casual conversation, surely not in just one sentence.

Of course, this begs an ironic question: Can you and I (we who have read their novels many times) express even to one another our reasons for loving these novels in just one, single, sentence? Since I have had more time to reflect on this matter than most people, let me be first to lay my sentence on the counter top of discussion. My fascination for the Brontës can be expressed in the following sentence: Because they knew the value of straw, the Brontës refused to spin it into gold. Indeed, these three young women loved the truth more than anything else. What dazzled the world did not dazzle them. I am not saying that they despised what the world valued. We know, for example, how much Charlotte Brontë yearned for beauty, or at least, how much she gave that impression. Her publisher, George Smith (of Smith, Elder and Co.), perceived such a yearning, and he describes its intensity as he recalls meeting Charlotte for the first time:

There was but little feminine charm about her; and of this fact she herself was uneasily and perpetually conscious. It may seem strange that the possession of genius did not lift her above the

weakness of an excessive anxiety about her personal appearance. But I believe she would have given all her genius and her fame to have been beautiful. (Sellars 96)<sup>1</sup>

We cannot measure the authenticity of that last statement, but given how she evidently valued beauty, what courage and vision on Charlotte's part to portray Jane Eyre as birdlike, pale, and hard to point out in a room full of people! Indeed, to create a literary heroine who was not beautiful was unheard of in Victorian England, and this heroine was positively plain. Charlotte knew that a woman could be perfectly fulfilled, even without beauty, money, connections, or prospects. This conviction induced her to insist in the second edition of *Jane Eyre* that "appearance should not be mistaken for truth" (xx). Such a maxim allowed her to resist the dazzle of gold and proclaim the value of straw; that is, cherish the simplicity that dwells within, from which her hidden genius could draw strength and derive inspiration.

Charlotte's brilliance was inspired by yet another source – her sister, Emily, as she would later recollect:

One day in the autumn of 1845, I accidentally lighted on a MS volume of verse, in my sister Emily's hand-writing [...] I looked it over, and something more than surprise seized me – a deep conviction that these were not common effusions, nor at all like the poetry women generally write. I thought them condensed and terse, vigorous and genuine. To my ear they had also a peculiar music, wild, melancholy, and elevating. My sister Emily was not a person of demonstrative character [...] it took hours to reconcile her to the discovery I had made, and days to persuade her that such poems merited publication. (Gaskell 228)

Charlotte recalls that soon her youngest sister, Anne, seeing that she took pleasure in reading Emily's poems, gave Charlotte some of her own poems to peruse as well, and

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<sup>1</sup> *cf.*, *The British Library Writers; Lives: Charlotte Brontë* by Jane Sellars, Oxford University Press, 1997.

having done so, Charlotte declared “that these verses too had a sweet sincere pathos of their own” (Gaskell 228). What follows is literary history. The three sisters submitted their poems for publication under the names of Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell, for reasons best expressed by Charlotte: “We did not like to declare ourselves women, because [...] we had a vague impression that authoresses are liable to be looked on with prejudice” (228).

This was a slick move on their part, and they used these same pseudonyms in 1847 when they presented their novels for publication: *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights*, and *Agnes Grey*, by Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell, respectively. Their gender-trick might never have been discovered had not a rumor started to circulate that the authors of the above novels were all one and the same individual. Elizabeth Gaskell states that this rumor not only “affected their literary reputation, they conceived it to have a bearing likewise upon their character” (281). So great was their desire to reveal the truth that on July 7, 1848, Charlotte and Anne packed a small traveling bag, set off for the station in a thunderstorm, and took the night train bound for London. (The dread of leaving her beloved moors kept Emily at the kitchen hearth with her dog, Keeper.)

Gaskell goes on to describe how Charlotte and Anne all but crashed Mr. Smith’s publishing house, demanded an immediate interview, introduced themselves, and then explained the identities of Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell. In so doing, they proclaimed the truth of their triple authorship as three young women, not one male author of three works (Gaskell 282-283). News of this visitation stunned the metropolis. Overnight, their fame shot across the Atlantic. Although these events are well known, my delight in recalling them is perennial, and paramount in terms of writing my dissertation. It was not only

their love of truth which rudely shoved Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell out of the parlor and sent them – stumbling – into the floodlights, it was also their love of self. For all their demureness, their egos were quite substantial. These young women were not only brilliant – they were downright competitive – and with one another. In their anger at being mistaken for one single author, we can practically hear their outraged whispers: “This is *my* work! Only *I* could produce this novel; no other man, woman, or Brontë could have written what *I* wrote!” Granted, they were also proud of each other’s genius, but I suspect that – even greater than the fumes of coal emitted by the train – were the fumes of jealousy emitted by the Brontës. I believe that – mingled with their modesty – pulsed a strong jealous streak, just as throughout their novels, surges a strong current of envy.

My dissertation concerns these emotions because without them, the Brontës would never have been roused to a state of public feistiness, and without them, their novels would have lacked the fuel necessary to drive them from the churchyard in Haworth toward the printing presses on all four hemispheres. The Brontës needed these emotions to bring their characters to life, just as they needed one another for inspiration. Gaskell tells us that after their father and aunt went to bed, the three sisters “began to pace the room backwards and forwards, up and down [...] this was the time for discussing together the plots of their novels” (117). Their attraction to each other’s genius enriched the quality of their work, just as their attraction to the emotions of envy and jealousy provides me an original lens through which to view their novels. In the manner of Mihneau Moldoveanu and Nitin Nohria, I refer to envy and jealousy as the “master passions,” and I will show how they dominate all of the novels of the Brontës.

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## Introduction

### Envy and Jealousy through the Ages

We are not envious of just anyone's random attributes that we have not attained ourselves. Nor are we invariably jealous when our lovers flirt with random others. Rather, envy and jealousy are most likely to be felt when comparisons are made in domains that are especially important to how we define ourselves – that 'hit us where we live.'

-- Peter Salovey and Alexander J. Rothman,  
*Envy and Jealousy: Self and Society*

#### CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND (Aristotle – to Milton – to the Brontës)

Before discussing how envy and jealousy operate in the novels of Charlotte, Anne, and Emily Brontë, let us consider how our understanding of these emotions has evolved. Surprises are in store, one which I can sum up in the next seven lines. Well into our first decade of the twenty-first century, the concepts of envy and jealousy are still so readily associated with the founder of psychoanalysis that we seldom reflect upon the fact that both these emotions had been analyzed and well defined long before the death of Sigmund Freud in 1939. Indeed, if we credit our understanding of envy and jealousy to just one man from Vienna, or to the decades in which he delivered his lectures, we overlook invaluable portraits of these emotions we have inherited from such disparate and distant sources as, for example, ancient Greece or Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

As long ago as 45 – 120 A.D., Plutarch realized that envy was such an innate dimension of human nature that the coupling of politics with the turbulence of this emotion was a generally accepted premise: "It may be possible to find a country without wild animals, as it is said about Crete, but a government untroubled by envy, rivalry, or contention, all passions that breed enmity, has been hitherto unheard of" (*How to Profit by Your Enemies*, 41). Plutarch claimed that even though envy influences the public arena of government, when it dwells within the human heart, shame induces the envious to hide

their envy from view. In this case, envy becomes a matter of strict secrecy, and there is nothing public about it at all, as when Plutarch asserts: “But people will deny that they envy and when shown the contrary, they will feign any number of excuses [...] cloaking and concealing their envy with the name of whatever other passion they can think of, thus implying that it alone is unmentionable among the diseases of the soul” (3).

Given his understanding of envy (and his claim that envy promotes deception and secrecy), Plutarch anticipated Freud by nearly two thousand years. However, where Freud would employ the term *repression*, Plutarch employed the term *shame*; and while Plutarch defined envy as one of the diseases of the *soul*, Freud diagnosed repression as one of the diseases of the *mind*, specifically, the jealous mind which furtively shuns exposure due to “resistance and from dread of the continuation of the analysis” (312). In both cases, though, a certain *dis-ease*, or rather, a certain *disruption* of ease, accompanies the experience of envy, a notion espoused by Aristotle nearly four hundred years before Plutarch.<sup>1</sup>

To wit, Aristotle (384 – 322 B.C.) recognized a certain “pain caused by seeing the presence, in persons whose nature is like our own, of good things that are highly valued and are possible for ourselves to acquire [...] envy makes us take steps to stop our neighbour [from] having them” (*Rhetoric*, 2212). For Aristotle, envy is not a passive emotion at all; on the contrary, it is dynamic – even aggressive – and performs whatever action is necessary to prevent those persons we deem similar to ourselves from procuring

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<sup>1</sup> For a definitive analysis of the term *envy*, see *Summa Theologica* by St. Thomas Aquinas (Benziger Bros. edition, 1947). According to Aquinas: “Since envy is about another’s good name in so far as it diminishes the good name a man desires to have, it follows that a man is envious of those only whom he wishes to rival or surpass in reputation [...] Wherefore a man envies not those who are far removed from him, whether in place, time, or station, but those who are near him, and whom he strives to rival or surpass [...] envy is sorrow for another’s good [...] we may grieve over another’s good, not because he has it, but because the good which he has, we have not” (pp. 1799-1800).

that status or esteem which would look much better on *us* than on *them*. In other words, the envious not only study their opponent, they also prevent as many shots of prosperity as they can from reaching the goal posts of their envied rival. By the same token, Plutarch would later assert: “Envy and hatred are so like each other that they are often thought to be the same [...] there is plenty of evidence showing that many would acknowledge their hatred, but none would confess their envy” (1-2). In other words, envy bespeaks a certain degree of shame which, in turn, leads to secrecy.

From ancient Greek philosophy, therefore, we have learned that envy is both inert *and* pro-active; it warily scrutinizes what it covets and strives to snatch the opponent’s merit badge for itself. Yet the envious are so ashamed of their envy that they conceal it at all costs, shielding it from view while lurking in their own private observatory where they can peer at their opponent without, however, being seen themselves. At this point, I must ask a question which, despite its ambiguity, is not the least bit rhetorical: Who among us, after considering the commentary of Aristotle and Plutarch, can ignore the unsettling suspicion that envy exists outside of ourselves and seems to have a mind of its own?<sup>2</sup>

*Paradise Lost* (1674) answers this question in the affirmative. In Book One, for example, Milton considers the rebellion of Adam and Eve against God: “Who first seduced them to that foul revolt? / Th’ infernal Serpent; he it was, whose guile / Stirred up with envy and revenge, deceived/The mother of mankind” (33-36). In a manner of speaking, envy and deception, before pitching their tents in the human heart, thrived first

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<sup>2</sup> See Robert Burton’s *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (Oxford, 1621), in particular, Section III: concerning Jealousy and its Equivocations; and Subsect II: The Causes of Jealousy. Burton claimed that jealousy is one cause of melancholy, a belief shared by John Keats who approved of Burton’s tome, “underscoring and annotating” his own copy with such comments as ‘Good!’ ‘Aye, aye!’ and ‘Extraordinary!’ (*John Keats: The Making of a Poet*, pp. 312-313 by Aileen Ward; New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1986)

on their own soil, and only entered the human heart by seducing it. The rebellion of Adam and Eve against God is a consequence of Satan's envy; they would have never tasted envy were it not for Satan's guile. Moreover, just as Plutarch acknowledged the tendency for people to cloak and conceal their envy, so is Milton intrigued with diabolical disguise: "Satan, having compassed the Earth, with meditated guile returns as a mist by night into Paradise, enters into the serpent sleeping [...] The serpent finds her alone; his subtle approach, first gazing, then speaking, with much flattery extolling Eve above all other creatures" (Book 9, *Argument*).

Once again, envy is linked with the hidden gaze. Just as Aristotle describes the pain of the envious at seeing their neighbors possessed of "good things" of which they strive to deprive them; so does Satan recoil at the sight of Adam and Eve making love, and then proceeds to divide them. From their sustained rapture: "aside the Devil turned / For envy, yet with jealous leer malign / Eyed them askance" (IV. 502-504). A riveted voyeur and an isolated spectator, Satan cannot grasp the notion of joy achieved through self-surrender. For this reason, engaged with malice, Satan silently muses:

Sight hateful, sight tormenting! thus these two  
 Imparadised in one another's arms  
 The happier Eden, shall enjoy their fill  
 Of bliss on bliss, while I to hell am thrust,  
 Where neither joy nor love, but fierce desire,  
 Among our other torments not the least,  
 Still unfulfilled with pain of longing pines.  
 (IV. 505-11)

Although Satan is tortured by what he sees, he cannot turn away; envy compels him to prolong his scrutiny and to contrast the "bliss" of the embracing lovers with the bitterness of his own isolation. According to Frank Kermode, when Satan spies on Adam and Eve

making love in the garden: “It is not merely that the absolutely innocent and joyous act is observed as through a peep-hole, [ ...] Satan himself acquires some of the pathos of an old *voyeur* [...] Milton boldly hints that the fallen angel is sexually deprived” (598). Indeed, a sense of being slighted, of being injured, of being unjustly divested of what rightfully belongs to him, are intrinsic traits of Satan and emblematic of the envious. Devoid of a (natural) body, it is ludicrous that Satan should be jealous of the exquisite intimacy he ravenously beholds. Yet envy sharpens his craving to probe – then destroy – the privileged pair. Without camouflage, however, Satan refuses to manifest himself.

In this same vein, after dubbing Satan a “surveillant,” Wilma G. Armstrong states that “[i]n order to gain knowledge he is forced to get close to Adam and Eve. He can only do so by disguising himself in animal form. Alternatively, he needs height to procure a wider view” (101). In other words, appearing before Adam and Eve in undisguised form – openly and honestly – is not an option for Satan because envy resists exposure and abhors transparency. Moreover, to proclaim to the enemy: “I am observing you” is the same as providing him arms with which to defend himself. Secrecy and surveillance are essential in order for the envious to subdue the envied, and if disguise is needed to rob them of their riches, their inheritance, or their happiness, so much the better.

Although Milton’s perceptions are similar to those of Aristotle and Plutarch, we can see how his understanding of envy is more complex than theirs. According to Plutarch and Aristotle, the envious regard their rivals with unceasing vigilance. For Milton, however, the envied are fully aware of being scrutinized, as is apparent when Adam reminds Eve: “for thou know’st / What hath been warned us, what malicious foe /

Envyng our happiness, and of his own / Despairing, seeks to work us woe and shame /  
 By sly assault; and somewhere nigh at hand / Watches, no doubt, with greedy hope to  
 find / His wish and best advantage” (IX. 252-258). Here Milton casts an entirely new  
 light on the nature of envy: Adam and Eve know what Satan cannot possibly realize.  
 They know they are being closely watched by a “malicious foe” who lives and breathes  
 only for that moment in which to assault them, unawares. Essentially, they watch  
 themselves being watched, but the envious predator is blind to this fact. In other words,  
 the predator knows that an attack – instigated by himself – is at hand, but does not know  
 that his prey is aware of the pending siege. What’s more, Milton’s choice of terminology  
 is distinctly militant (*foe, assault, best advantage*) and we can see that – in addition to the  
 acts of seducing and being seduced – the occupants of Eden are steeped in the  
 infrastructure of espionage. As such, a full-blown war is on, or rather, is *continued*,  
 having been launched earlier by envy’s first frontal assault. In fact, Satan’s hatred of  
 Adam and Eve springs from his far greater hatred of God, based on the following episode  
 from *The Apocalypse* of Saint John the Apostle:

And there was a battle in heaven; Michael and his angels battled with  
 the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels. And they did not  
 prevail, neither was their place found any more in heaven. And that  
 great dragon was cast down, the ancient serpent, he who is called the  
 devil and Satan, who leads astray the whole world; and he was cast  
 down to the earth and with him his angels were cast down. (12.7-9)

In his envy of God’s superlative power, Satan departs from the company of (righteous)  
 angels, declaring war against God, and later, against Adam and Eve. Rebellion, rage, and  
 revenge are tokens of Satan’s envy, which perversely increases “the more he sees / Of  
 pleasure not for him ordained” (IX. 69-70). Milton’s notion of envy reflects the concepts

of Plutarch and Aristotle, underscoring the fact that to envy is to spy upon the rival, and therein discover how to cut off his sources of esteem and prosperity. For Milton, though, where there is envy, there is also rage. War is eventually declared against the envied party, if not openly, then in prolonged and strategic disguise.<sup>3</sup>

Now, anyone familiar with the Brontës must surely see parallels between envy and rage as depicted in *Paradise Lost*, and envy and rage as depicted (subtly or blatantly) in their novels. Clearly, many aspects of Milton's Satan can be found in the portraits of Rochester, Arthur Huntingdon, Edward Crimsworth and Heathcliff, as well as (but not limited to) those of Mdlle. Reuter, Madame Beck, Catherine Linton, and Lucy Snowe. While these emotions are essentially *masculine* in Milton's mind, in the Brontëan mind, women – as well as men – are intimately acquainted with the rise and fall of envy and rage. Moreover, just as “aside the Devil turned / For envy,” and “with jealous leer malign” (IV. 502-504), so, too, in the novels of the Brontës, are jealousy and envy closely linked to the rising and falling action of their plots.

In fact, what Milton and the Brontës ingeniously revealed in their works, we still, in our present day, presume to be psychologically revealing. For one thing, we know that we cannot separate jealousy and envy into two separate, water-tight compartments; each seeps into the other, and indeed, looks so very much *like* the other that it is often difficult to tell them apart. One common denominator linking the two emotions is the concept of rivalry. The *Oxford English Dictionary*, for example, includes in its definition of envy

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<sup>3</sup> For more on the protean nature of envy and jealousy, cf. Shakespeare's *Othello, The Moor of Venice*, (1604). Iago's jealousy of Othello incites him to convince the Moor that Desdemona, the virtuous wife of Othello, has had adulterous relations with another man. Iago inwardly schemes: “When devils will the blackest sins put on,/They do suggest at first with heavenly shows,/As I do now [...] So will I turn her virtue into pitch,/And out of her own goodness make the net/That shall enmesh them all” (2.3.345-347, 354-355).



the *plural* sense of the word: “instances of envy; envious feelings, jealousies; rivalries” (1989). Envy, therefore, cannot be defined without including the notions of jealousy and rivalry; nor can jealousy be defined without including the concepts of rivalry and envy. More specifically, jealousy is the “fear of losing some good through the rivalry of another; resentment or ill-will towards another on account of advantage or superiority, possible or actual, on his part; envy, grudge” (*OED*, 1989).

In their analysis of envy and jealousy, contemporary theorists likewise continue to connect these two emotions. For example, in *Master Passions: Emotion, Narrative, and the Development of Culture*, Mihnea Moldoveanu and Nitin Nohria both claim that if

envy engenders resentment toward the one who has what you could have had, jealousy engenders resentment toward the one who might take away or diminish what you now have. ‘What could I lose – and how could I lose it?’ asks the jealous self, and she does not tire of finding fresh objects of resentment. Everyone – and anyone – could be coveting what is now *yours*, and they are about to try to get it: that is the belief at the core of the raw feel of envy. (92)

Here we not only see that jealousy and envy are connected, we also see that to be in their grip induces fear, vigilance, and unremitting suspicion. At the crux of the matter (for the jealous) is a cherished prize, a possession of significant value that might be torn from them at any moment by a more powerful person. By the same token, the envious are outraged because a certain individual possesses that which – by rights – *should* belong to them, and *could* have been theirs, had not the despised rival snatched it from their more deserving grasp.

Once again, rivalry is associated with both emotions; competition for excellence engenders malice, or as Nietzsche proclaims in *Beyond Good and Evil*: “We do not hate what we accord little value, but only what we consider equal or superior” to ourselves

(73). In other words, mediocrity never arouses envy or jealousy, only excellence (or perceived excellence) arouses these emotions, and in the process, pits the rival against the envied party. Similarly, Plutarch insists that the envious “would diminish the other’s fame and glory whenever they could [...] content to pull down the part of the house towering above theirs, that puts them in the shade” (5). Granted, the stakes are high. In toppling the house, the envious could be crushed along with their rivals. For the jealous and the envious, however, power must be procured by any means, no matter what the cost.

### **ENVY AND JEALOUSY IN THE NOVELS OF THE BRONTËS**

This dissertation examines ways in which Charlotte, Anne, and Emily Brontë use envy and jealousy to buttress the action in their novels, and to coordinate the distribution of power between the envious and the envied. Essentially, these emotions infuse the engine which drives their plots forward. I will demonstrate how the Brontës allot portions of envy and jealousy to winsome protagonists, and not only to their belligerent rivals. Thus, the net cast by these emotions yields a far greater catch (of consequences) than had it only included the envy of adversaries. Unlike Plutarch, Aristotle, and Milton, the Brontës indicate in their novels that envy and jealousy are experienced even by persons of the highest moral caliber, and not only by the aggressive and the scheming.

In writing about envy and jealousy, Charlotte, Emily and Anne Brontë reveal an appreciation of human nature that belies the relative monotony of their daily lives, suggesting that intimate familiarity with human emotions need not be contingent upon correlative human experience. Unfailingly, characters reveal who they are in accordance with what makes them envious. In the hands of the Brontës, jealousy is ingeniously

depicted and skillfully steered. Despite the invisibility of this silent engine, it leaves clear tracks in its wake. Their portrayal of characters consumed by envy, either culminates in marriages or destroys them, enriches marriages or impairs them. When we examine the influence of jealousy in these seven novels, and the impact of envy upon the development of politics, families, careers, marriages, property ownership, income, and religious beliefs, we not only reach a deeper understanding of human nature and of human behavior, but also of ourselves in relationship to the Brontëan protagonist.

I have chosen to examine the novels of the Brontës through the twin lenses of envy and jealousy, not only for the reasons stated above, but also because a study of this nature has not been conducted until now, and I would like to add my findings to the wealth of Brontëan scholarship. Although a synoptic study of envy and jealousy has not been conducted on all seven novels, many critics have highlighted the importance of these emotions in one particular work, or when comparing one novel to another. To indicate just a few of these: John Maynard, in *Charlotte Brontë and Sexuality*, considers the complex personality of Lucy Snowe and concludes that jealousy, “as always in Brontë, is a sign of mature sexual engagement” (206). Maynard demonstrates how Lucy’s jealousy is an indication of great psychological and sexual growth, and her willingness to admit to this emotion is the first step she takes to free herself from its restraints.

Less subtly, Arnold Craig Bell considers Gilbert Markham in *The Novels of Anne Brontë: A Study and Reappraisal*, and declares that “with the advent of jealousy and the growth of his frustrated passion, the story gathers momentum, moving rapidly and with superb narrative power to its climax” (81). Under the influence of jealousy, Markham

induces a woman to hand over her diary containing details of her husband's adultery and intricate accounts of marital infidelity among the landed gentry. More recent Brontëan scholars, such as Diane Long Hoeveler and Lisa Jadwin, discuss Rochester's deliberate arousal of jealousy in the eponymous *Jane Eyre*, through a "series of ruses, including charades," all of which lead to a marriage proposal, designs of bigamy, and a subverted fortune of £20,000 (*Charlotte Brontë: Twayne's English Authors Series*, 64-65). As such, I see the archetypal Brontëan plot as a wheel; jealousy as its hub; while plans of marriage, plots of bigamy, and the discovery of an inheritance serve as adjacent spokes, all set in motion through the centrifugal force of camouflage. The above cited studies – in tandem with my own reading of these novels – indicate that in the hands of the Brontës, jealousy is more than an episodic emotion; their plots advance according to its ebb and flow. In their novels, jealousy is employed as litmus paper, revealing the deepest (and often, the least verbalized) motivations of human behavior.

Although this is a unique approach to analyzing the Brontës, I am not alone in my zeal to examine their genius in a new light. For example, EBSCO data bases reveal that from 1994 – 2004, one hundred and three doctoral dissertations have been written either exclusively on the novels of the Brontës, or in conjunction with such writers as Byron, Austen, Eliot and Dickens. A survey of words which most frequently appear in the titles of these Brontëan dissertations is provided in the three columns below.

### **Structure/Image**

### **Mind/Spirit**

### **Body/Senses**

<b>ethics, ideology, class, conduct, self, body, community, beauty, language, text, action, resisting, illness, myth</b>	<b>consciousness, passion, teaching, plain, repressive, judging, conflicted, web, silence, dream, shadows, intertextuality, monsters</b>	<b>control, flesh, judicious, Christianity, desire, rhetoric, pain, growing, health, social, trauma, accomplished, violence</b>
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Given this selective vocabulary, we can see that the writers of these dissertations have encapsulated some important concepts which figure significantly in the novels of the Brontës. Notice that the above charts are overwhelmingly gender-neutral. Ethics, class, ideology and conduct are the focus of many of these studies, along with the concepts of *action* and *text*. This recent decade of scholarship neither touts – nor dismisses – the feminist approach to Brontëan scholarship, and neither do I. My dissertation, however, is not a feminist study *per se*. After all, jealousy and envy are not only feminine emotions, but are part and parcel of the human experience, male as well as female. The Brontës tethered their novels to this conviction, and my study is tethered to this same understanding.

In some respects, though, this dissertation springs from a comment made by Terry Eagleton in the second edition to *Myths of Power: A Marxist Study of the Brontës*, wherein he claims that “[f]eminist criticism in our time has struck up a kind of logical alliance with psychoanalytical theory” (xviii). The “logical alliance” may not be of a purely feminist nature, yet it is thanks to the marriage of feminist criticism with psychoanalytical theory that I can count myself among its progeny. This is not to say that feminist criticism has ended or failed, but rather, has spilled over into an even larger pool than the one from which it first emerged.

This recent pool of Brontëan scholarship includes (but is not limited to) the following critics and their works: Sally Shuttleworth (*Charlotte Brontë and Victorian Psychology*); Drew Lamonica (*We Are Three Sisters: Self and Family in the Writing of the Brontës*); Irene Taylor (*Holy Ghosts: The Male Muses of Emily and Charlotte Brontë*); Diane Long Hoeveler (*Gothic Feminism: The Professionalization of Gender*

from *Charlotte Smith to the Brontës*); Harold Bloom (*Genius: A Mosaic of One Hundred Exemplary Creative Minds*); Mike Edwards (*Charlotte Brontë: The Novels*); Jin-ok Kim (*Charlotte Brontë and Female Desire*); Ian Campbell (“The Brontës and Power”); and Carl Plasa (*Charlotte Brontë: Critical Issues*). Of course, these works warrant more than mere honorable mention; and I will consider them more closely in the first chapter of this dissertation.

Besides fulfilling the above objective, Chapter One will address the function of envy and jealousy in *Jane Eyre* (1847), Charlotte Brontë’s first published novel, as well as in *Shirley* (1849), based on the Luddite riots<sup>4</sup> that took place in Yorkshire from 1811-1816. In this chapter, I will compare the frenzied courtship of Rochester and Bertha, to the more calculated courtship of Rochester and Jane. In both cases, I will argue that envy and avarice are joined at the hip, which will alter – for better or worse – the subsequent gait of marriages, families, and feminine autonomy. I will discuss Rochester’s deliberate arousal of Jane’s jealousy in order to force her to declare her love, and then I will consider the implications of this deception.

In *Shirley*, we learn that a person may be the object of life-long resentment and never know it at all, as when Yorke secretly envies Helstone for marrying his beloved Mary Cave, yet Helstone assumes that their differences are of a political nature. In both *Jane Eyre* and *Shirley*, though, envy and jealousy tend to generate secrecy, and to inflict more than their fair share of damage, especially during the rituals of courtship. In both

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<sup>4</sup> For a concise overview of the Luddite revolts, see Christine Alexander and Margaret Smith’s *The Oxford Companion to the Brontës*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 309-310. Also, Rebecca Fraser’s biography, *Charlotte Brontë* (London: Methuen, 1988) provides valuable insights into this historical period, crf. pp. 11, 298, 329.

novels, the power of jealousy and the power of the voyeuristic gaze influence the dynamics of courtship, and instill suspicion within same-sex relationships.

Chapter Two analyzes how envy and jealousy operate in *The Professor* (the first novel written by Charlotte Brontë, published posthumously in 1857), as compared with how they function in *Villette* (1853). Jane Sellars declares that *The Professor* is “based on Charlotte’s Brussels experience, but is far less successful than her later autobiographical novel *Villette*” (61). In both novels, however, the headmistress of a girls’ school is described as jealous, spying, conniving, and sinister, all qualities which serve to torment the protagonists, William Crimsworth and Lucy Snowe, respectively. Many critics, such as W. A. Craik, maintain that Mlle. Reuter in *The Professor*, and Madame Beck in *Villette*, “are generally agreed to have their original in Mme Héger. Mme Beck is obviously the subtler and less pleasant recreation. If the hatred were simply Charlotte Brontë’s for Mme Héger (the jealous wife of the man she reputedly loved) one would have expected it to be least disguised in the earlier portrait” (181).

Although this chapter – as with the rest of my dissertation – favors textual interpretation more than biographical allusion, I must acknowledge that Brontë’s depictions of Mlle. Reuter and Madame Beck, including their zest for espionage, springs from Brontë’s obsession with the prying Mme Héger; which, in turn, springs from her even greater obsession for this woman’s husband, Constantin Héger, Charlotte and Emily’s teacher in Brussels with whom Charlotte was undoubtedly enamored. Chapter Two, therefore, addresses the voyeuristic aspects of jealousy portrayed in *The Professor* and *Villette*, especially those that anticipate the findings (by some one hundred and fifty

years) of such contemporary theorists as Mihnea Moldoveanu, Nitin Nohria, and Rosemary Lloyd.

Chapter Three addresses jealousy and envy as depicted in *Agnes Grey* (1847), Anne Brontë's first novel, and Chapter Four will examine these same emotions in her second and last novel, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848). At first glance, the disparity between these two works – especially in tone – seems to defy comparison. *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, for instance, depicts drunkenness, licentiousness, and a woman's flight from a brutal husband who has been committing adultery under their roof – and with more than one woman. By contrast, *Agnes Grey* advocates piety and meekness, yet I will argue that even the sobriety of Agnes Grey does not offset her jealousy of Rosalie Murray. For her part, Rosalie has no scruples when it comes to capturing the hearts of all virile males within reach, even those she despises, if only for the delight she experiences in arousing envy, and thus, exerting power over men and women alike. Moreover, in these two novels, the jealousy of possessive husbands (Sir Thomas Ashby and Lord Arthur Huntingdon), keeps their wives on a tight leash, while they dedicate themselves to the pursuit of women, the consumption of liquor, and the delights of the gaming table.

In Chapter Five, I analyze envy and jealousy in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), insofar as these emotions furiously pit men against men, and women against women. Equally terrifying are contests of power between men and women, such as the one waged by Heathcliff against Isabella, purely for the sake of enacting revenge on his detested and envied rival, Edgar Linton. As in the previous novels, jealousy and envy in *Wuthering Heights* rarely lie dormant. When envy and jealousy are aroused, the