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**‘Is a woman a thinking unit at all, or a fraction always
wanting its integer?’ Representations of female
education in four English and French *Bildungsromane***

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Abstract

This thesis considers George Sand’s *Valentine* (1832), Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847), Gustave Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* (1856) and Thomas Hardy’s *Jude the Obscure* (1895) as female *Bildungsromane* to analyse representations of nineteenth-century female education in England and France. The research presents a justification for an inclusive approach to the *Bildungsroman* genre, the parameters of which remain widely contested and often exclude the consideration of the female protagonist. Fundamentally, this work asserts education as being a critical component of the development, well-being and contentment of women as represented by the female protagonists in these novels. The approach adopted combines perspectives from feminist criticism and *Bildungsroman* genre theory with comparative historical analyses and detailed close readings of the novels to highlight the centrality of female education in the struggle for gender equality.

Education is essential to shaping both the individual and society. It reflects and reinforces ideological assumptions, morality and notions and realities of personal worth and potential, and thus, it was a key focus for nineteenth-century feminist campaigners, both in England and in France. Formal education for girls was of a utilitarian nature, designed to prepare them for roles within the private rather than

the public sphere, which was the preserve of men. Many feared that educating women beyond the requirements of domesticity would disrupt the social hierarchy and interfere with male privileges, rendering debates on the nature and purpose of female education highly contentious.

While the traditional male *Bildungsroman* of the period assumes the eventual accommodation of the individual by broader society after a prolonged period of formation, social expectations and assumptions about the female remit hindered such complex development, rendering comfortable integration of the developed or educated female self into society structurally impossible. Reading these novels as female *Bildungsromane* illuminates the struggle of the individual woman against then-contemporary patriarchal conventions, including obstacles to and the psycho-social consequences of female education in all its facets.

'Successful' *Bildung*, culminating in the protagonist's acceptance into society, occurs only in *Jane Eyre*, whose linear structure adheres most closely to the traditional male model of the *Bildungsroman*, albeit not without compromise. The success of Jane's formation hinges on her ability to delay marriage until she can commit on her own terms after an extended period of development. She is able to resist unsatisfactory marriage proposals by means of self-assertion, cultivated by her reading and the establishment of female support networks. In contrast, the protagonists' development in the other narratives is more circular as they are unable to extricate themselves from the mistakes of their youth, rely on female companionship, or overthrow the prejudices of their respective societies.

In each novel, the outcomes of a utilitarian model of formal education are represented as damaging. Not only does a system based on control of women thwart the development of the individual, but such methods actually encourage the rebellion they are designed to prevent. Self-education, and, in particular, self-directed reading, is represented as an act of resistance against the established order. In all four novels, the development of female *Bildung* appears thwarted by society's refusal to grant women the process of trial and error which is integral to male *Bildung*. With the exception of *Jane Eyre*, there is a negative correlation between the development of self-knowledge and the social opportunities available.

By centralising the plight of the female protagonist, the novels become vehicles of social criticism that present the dire consequences of a system predicated on female dependence and repression. They present powerful counter-narratives to the traditional educational remit for women, reflecting the growing social unrest that instigated social reform and fuelled the gradual movement towards female emancipation.

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Introduction

The nineteenth century was a period of far-reaching political, economic, and social developments both in England and in France, which included the widening of male suffrage, educational reform, and the emergence of the women's movement. Alongside the right to vote and to own property, equal access to education was one of the central demands of the women's rights movement. 'Education was what the slave-owners most dreaded for their slaves, for they knew it to be the sure road to emancipation. It is to education that we must first look for the emancipation of women', wrote the English reformer Josephine Butler in 1868. (Butler 2001: 79)

In England, the Equal Franchise Act, which allowed women the same voting rights as men, was not passed until 1928, and in France, this was not achieved until 1944, almost one hundred years after universal male suffrage passed into statute (1848). Wives in England were prohibited from owning their own property until the Married Women's Property Act of 1882, and in France, although married women were able to dispose of their own income from 1907, they were unable to work without their husband's permission or open a personal bank account until 1965. Such laws reflect the legal difficulties facing women who sought independence and support the assumption that the system was built to preserve male dominance.

The current definitions of 'education' offered by *The Chambers Dictionary* include: the 'bringing up or training [...] of a child', 'instruction' at a school or university, and lastly, 'strengthening of the powers of body and mind; culture'. (Brookes 2003: 475) Depending on the context, 'education' can therefore relate to formal instruction, upbringing, self-cultivation or socialisation. Each of these domains of meaning also plays a role in the concept of *Bildung*. The word

'education' originates from two Latin concepts: *educare*, meaning to 'train; to bring up a child physically or mentally'; and *educere*, meaning 'to lead or draw out'. (Smith and Lockwood 2002: 223) On the one hand, *educare* suggests the passing-on of knowledge, usually from a member of an older generation, and on the other, *educere* denotes the ability to use and adapt knowledge in order to apply oneself to new environments — to be able to think critically and find solutions to problems that arise. Randall V. Bass and J.W. Good argue that one of the major problems in modern attitudes towards education is that people understand the word in different ways, some as *educare* and others as *educere*:

One side uses education to mean the preservation and passing down of knowledge and the shaping of youths in the image of their parents. The other side sees education as preparing a new generation for the changes that are to come — readying them to create solutions to problems yet unknown. One calls for rote memorisation and becoming good workers. The other requires questioning, thinking and creating. (Bass and Good 2004: 162)

With this in mind, *educare* can be understood as a means of preserving the status quo through the perpetuation and emulation of traditional attitudes, and *educere* could denote the development of the autonomy of the individual. This dichotomy reflects the contrast between a utilitarian approach to education and the concept of *Bildung* celebrated by Wilhelm von Humboldt. In this thesis, the term 'utilitarian education' is used to describe education that serves the state and society as opposed to the development of the individual.

In an early nineteenth-century definition, the emphasis on the moral and social aspects of education is more pronounced. In Johnson's dictionary of 1805,

the main entry for 'education' reads: 'Formation of manners in youth; the manner of breeding youth, nurture'. (1805: s.p.) Here, intellectual development is not mentioned, but the reference to 'manners' reflects a preoccupation with social conformity. The entry also draws on Swift to underpin the importance of morality in the teaching of the young: 'All nations have agreed in the necessity of a strict education, which consisted in the observance of moral duties'. (s.p.)

The emphasis on morality is also evident in the mid-nineteenth-century French definition. In Littré's *Dictionnaire de la Langue Française* (1863), 'éducation' is defined as: 'Action d'élever, de former un enfant, un jeune homme; ensemble des habiletés intellectuelles ou manuelles qui s'acquièrent, et ensemble des qualités morales qui se développent'. (Littré 1863: 1303) The gender-specific term 'un jeune homme' demonstrates the attitude that education was primarily viewed as a pursuit for men, who would require intellectual and practical skills in order to occupy the public sphere. A subsequent example of 'éducation' in usage refers to the 'Éducation des filles' as an entry separate from the general definition of 'éducation'. This reflects the idea that girls' education was an isolated phenomenon and therefore not integral to the concept of education itself. The definition in this entry quotes the Archbishop François Fénelon, who wrote a treatise on *L'Éducation des Filles* in 1687: 'Rien n'est plus négligé que l'éducation des filles; [...] on suppose qu'on doit donner à ce sexe peu d'instruction; l'éducation des garçons passe pour une des principales affaires par rapport au bien public'. (cited in Littré 1863: 1303) The fact that a mid-nineteenth century definition of education draws on work published nearly two centuries earlier alludes to the antiquated attitude towards the education of girls in France at the time of the dictionary's publication. In one sense, Fénelon laments the neglect of girls' education, but he does not appear to consider this a matter of utmost public

concern, given that the female destiny was domestic. This is evocative of the 'separate spheres' approach to the sexes, which dominated nineteenth-century discourses on education and gender roles in both countries.

The expectation that women were to remain dependent is evidenced by the educational provision in both countries. In England, compulsory primary education for girls aged five to ten was not introduced until the Education Act of 1880, and in France, a similar law was introduced in 1882 by Jules Ferry, which decreed that all children aged six to thirteen were to receive formal schooling. While the state started to take an interest in education in France much earlier than in England following Napoleon's Civil Code of 1804, no significant progress was made with regards to girls' education in either country until the middle of the century. In 1848, Queen's College London was opened with the intention to provide governesses with an education supported by academic qualifications and across the channel, 1850 saw the introduction of the Falloux Law, which broadened the availability of primary education for girls in communes of over 800 people. The schools established in France between 1850 and 1853 were not free of charge, however, and 60 per cent of them were run by religious orders at which teachers were not required to obtain the *brevet de capacité* certificate. State-run colleges accepted women in France from 1879, but female students were unable to prepare specifically for the baccalauréat until 1924, indicating a reluctance for women to pursue higher academic ambitions. Though in England, the founding of Girton College Cambridge in 1869 signalled women's admission to the university, a similar attitude was reflected in that they were not granted equal degree status at the college until 1948. The University of London was the first in the United Kingdom to gain the authority to award degrees to women in 1878, and in France, the first degree was awarded to a woman in Lyon in 1861. Writing at the beginning

of the century, Madame la Comtesse de Rémusat made a statement that was to remain relevant to the state's negligent attitude towards female education in both countries for the remainder of the century: 'L'éducation a une grande autorité sur toute la vie, elle nous prépare à l'état que nous devons remplir dans la société'. (Rémusat 1824: 22-3)

This utilitarian attitude that education, or lack thereof, should be directed towards the fulfilment of state interests was also reflected in the haphazard nature of the curricula, which generally comprised religion, skills for domestic work and literacy and numeracy. In France, the precedent was set by Napoleon who had a vested interest in restoring public order by 'strengthening the patriarchal family' after the disruption caused by the Revolution: 'He saw religion as the essence of girls' education, and envisaged only a limited curriculum, three-quarters of which was devoted to needlework and domestic economy'. (Bellaigue: 2007: 27, 28)

The content of the education at non-religious schools included 'lecture, écriture, travaux de couture' with the addition of 'l'orthographe, plain-chant et l'arithmétique, limitée à l'addition et à la soustraction' in smaller schools. (Mayeur 1979: 23) According to James F. McMillan, however, despite education for girls having become more accessible from the 1850s, the content of the teaching in both state and religious schools remained limited, as 'more time was devoted to the teaching of religion and sewing than to reading, writing and arithmetic'. (McMillan 2000: 60)

In England, the content of girls' education was similarly non-standardised, particularly in the first half of the century. Middle class girls 'were taught to read and write and instructed in religion', but beyond this, their education generally focused on accomplishments intended to represent class status and attract a husband, such as 'drawing, singing, [...] playing a musical instrument' and the

study of modern languages. (Steinbach 2005: 175) Although the state began to take more of an interest in education following Forster's Education Act of 1870, the intention for women to remain in the private sphere is reflected in the initiative of the 1870s which offered women financial incentives to study domestic economy. (see Steinbach 2005: 183)

Despite the progress made in women's education in both countries over the course of the century, women's destiny was widely considered to be confined to domestic roles as wives and mothers. In England, for example, Queen Victoria 'subscribed to the middle-class truism that marriage was women's profession' and was 'appalled' at the suggestion that women's suffrage should be considered as the next natural progression. (Schama 2002: 219, 217) The idea that a woman was formed for marriage and should be educated with such an objective in mind was supported by English nineteenth-century writers and philosophers such as John Ruskin and Coventry Patmore. In his lecture, *Of Queen's Gardens* (1864), Ruskin advocated the idea that 'the woman's true place and power' lay in the home and that her learning should be directed for the benefit of her husband: 'a man ought to know any science or language he learns, thoroughly — while a woman ought to know the same language, or science, only so far as may enable her to sympathise in her husband's pleasures'. (Ruskin 1895: 109, 118) This attitude reflects the 'separate spheres' approach to both education and social roles; women were not to be educated for their own progress or pleasure, but to reinforce patriarchal inequalities. Furthermore, Ruskin anticipated that the limited knowledge a woman gained was to render her 'enduringly, incorruptibly good; instinctively, infallibly wise — wise, not for self-development, but for self-renunciation'. (109) In spite of the restrictions placed on their knowledge and experience, women were entrusted with the morality of the nation's men and

children; fulfilment of this selfless female role was thus a duty to the state for which their education was to prepare them.

Arguments in favour of the subjection of women to men were prevalent in both England and France. Rousseau's publication of *Émile ou de l'Éducation* in 1762 asserted the importance of mothers as the moral guardians of the family, and by extension, the moral linchpin of the state. In Rousseau's view, given that 'les soins domestiques font la plus chère occupation de la femme et le plus doux amusement du mari', when 'les mères daignent nourrir leurs enfants, les mœurs vont se réformer d'elles-mêmes [...] ; l'État va se repeupler'. (Rousseau 2009: 58) He attributes public importance to the domestic sphere and asserts that women should be educated for such a role, in which their inferiority to men is reflected in their selflessness: 'toute l'éducation des femmes doit être relative aux hommes. Leur plaisir, leur être utiles [...] voilà les devoirs des femmes dans tous les temps, et ce qu'on doit leur apprendre dès leur enfance'. (526)

This approach to the purpose of female education had far-reaching influence in both countries for the duration of the nineteenth century. Comparable views are evident in Coventry Patmore's *The Angel in the House* (1854), in which he asserts that 'Man must be pleased; but him to please / Is woman's pleasure', forming an image of contented submission on which the Victorian ideal of woman was based. (Patmore 1887: 74) Similarly, according to the twentieth-century historian, Françoise Mayeur, the legacy of what she calls Rousseau's 'égocentrisme masculin' was evident over a hundred years after the publication of *Émile* in the Ferry laws of the early 1880s. Even though the law of 1882 made primary education for girls compulsory, Mayeur states that the justifications provided for 'les limites apportées à l'instruction féminine' substantially reflected Rousseau's approach. (Mayeur 1979: 32) This demonstrates that even those who were

essentially in favour of educating women often were so inclined in order to preserve the status quo. A further example of this can be seen in the works of Félix Dupanloup, who became the bishop of Orléans in 1849 and wrote extensively on the subject of education. His treatise on the education of girls laments an education system which prevents them from attaining 'leur développement légitime', and yet, his reasoning for the importance of female intelligence is that it should be used foremost to aid a woman in her duties towards others: 'son premier devoir, c'est de rendre heureux son Mari. Mais pour rendre un mari et des enfants bons et heureux [...] il faut précisément avoir des femmes fortes par l'intelligence'. (Dupanloup 1879: 13, 42) It is only once her duties towards God, her husband and her children are complete that she is permitted to devote any time to the cultivation of her own faculties: 'tous ces devoirs une fois remplis [...] il reste à se faire à soi-même la charité de travailler un peu pour soi'. (177) It emerges that Dupanloup, in spite of his support of the development of the female intellect, remains a proponent of the idea that women occupy the position at the base of the familial and social hierarchies.

As religion played a pivotal role in the formal and domestic education of girls in both countries, it can be assumed that female subservience pervaded the content of their instruction through study of scripture. The hierarchy supported by Dupanloup can be traced back to biblical references such as Ephesians 5: 22-24: 'Wives, submit yourselves unto your husbands, as unto the Lord. [...] [L]et the wives *be* to their own husbands in every thing'. Religious justification of male authority indicates that submission is integral to a woman's duty to God, which raises the importance of domestic obedience to a higher plane. The Bible also dictates that women should learn in accordance to their subordinate position, for example, in Timothy 2: 11-12 it is written: 'Let the woman learn in silence with all

subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, not to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence'. This excerpt encompasses the multiple elements of passivity that women were expected to adhere to: passivity towards men, their professional prospects and even their own learning. The instruction is that women are to relinquish their subjectivity in all aspects of life, including their spiritual and moral education: 'Let your women keep silence in the churches [...]. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church'. (Corinthians 14: 34-5) Forbidding women from talking in church excludes them from discussion of scripture and condemns them to passive observation rather than active participation in their education. It is by requiring that women remain silent, deferent and respectful of male authority, as supported by scripture, that the patriarchy protects itself from challenge. The fact that religious studies occupied such a significant portion of girls' education provides further evidence to suggest that curricula were designed in relation to state interests, not least the protection of male preserves.

The implication behind charging a husband with his wife's learning is that male superiority extends to the intellectual faculties. One dominant nineteenth-century argument was that the capacity of the intellect was linked to the capacity of the anatomy; it follows that men could claim intellectual dominance over women by virtue of greater physical stature. A proponent of this idea was Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, who argued: 'si l'homme avait plus de puissance nerveuse et musculaire que la femme, en vertu de l'unité de l'être, [...] il devait avoir aussi plus de puissance intellectuelle'. (Proudhon 1875: 25) Proudhon used this logic to justify his belief in the general inferiority of women and to legitimise the restriction of the female role to the private sphere. By asserting that a woman's nature 'l'a enchaînée, dans son développement même, à la beauté', he denies them

participation in public functions on the basis that 'la guerre sied [...] peu à la beauté' . (33, 12) For Proudhon, 'la guerre' encompasses all spheres of national influence, such as 'la politique', '[les] fonctions juridiques, policières ou gouvernementales', which leads him to the conclusion that 'le règne de la femme est dans la famille'. (12) The fact the Proudhon was elected to the Constituent Assembly in 1848 indicates that such views were generally accepted by constituents, or at the very least, not considered objectionable enough to harm his candidacy.

Arguments which discredited the female intellect and called for a limited sphere of female action on physiological grounds were also prevalent in England. In 1887, after educational provision for women had begun to broaden, the scientist, George J. Romanes, affirmed that the heavier male brain possessed 'a greater power of amassing knowledge' than the lighter female brain, which led to 'more numerous instances of profound erudition among men'. (Romanes 2001: 11) Of course, this argument does not take into account the far greater extent of the educational and professional opportunities that were open to men at the time, but it provides a useful example of the way in which male superiority was reinforced not only by religion, but by the science of the time, demonstrating that these beliefs were still common in the latter decades of the century.

The English educational writer, Elizabeth Sewell, concurred with the theory that the female constitution was not as suited to rigorous intellectual pursuits as the male in her 1865 text, *Principles of Education*. Her arguments were based on the fact that boys in their youth devoted more time to physical activity outdoors than girls, who were more accustomed to 'dwell[ing] in quiet homes'. (Sewell 2001: 144) According to Sewell, this sheltered existence rendered girls less able to bear the strain of study, which made them vulnerable to a decline in health: 'if she is

allowed to run the risks which to the boy are a matter of indifference, she will probably develop some disease which if not fatal, will at any rate be an injury to her for life'. (144-5) If this were true, the 'separate spheres' approach to gender roles and education reinforced itself; the assumption that girls required the protection of the domestic environment due to their inherent vulnerability rendered them less robust, and therefore less fit for study, meaning that they became even more dependent on the sphere they were intended to occupy. This approach only served to perpetuate the attitude of female dependence and intellectual inferiority, making it harder for girls to break the cycle.

The French historian Jules Michelet made a similar contribution to the canon of female helplessness in his *La Femme* of 1860, in which he proposed that the female physiology could not support the demands of labour outside of the household. He claimed that 'la femme ne peut travailler longtemps ni debout, ni assise' because of the likelihood of 'accidents sanguins', which led him to advise that the 'allant et venant' of household chores were best suited to the female disposition. (Michelet 1860: 21) The effect of this guidance was to dissuade women from any employment in the public sphere which might have provided independence, in favour of relegating women to domestic duties: 'Il faut qu'elle ait un ménage, il faut qu'elle soit mariée'. (21) Though expressed under the guise of chivalry, in essence, Michelet's views were no less misogynistic than those of Proudhon. He dismissed female participation in politics on his assessment that it required 'un esprit générateur et très-mâle', and asserted the idea that a woman's very existence was dependent upon men: 'Elle n'a pas un aliment, pas un bonheur, une richesse, qui ne lui vienne de lui'. (167) By creating the impression that men provide for women physically, emotionally and financially, Michelet implies that the reciprocity lies in women's selfless devotion to men thereafter. As

such, he demonstrates a general accordance to Rousseau's view that women are formed 'pour plaire et pour être subjuguée'. (Rousseau 2009: 517)

The numerous barriers stacked against women's intellectual, social and professional development offer an overview of the resistance towards allowing and developing female agency in nineteenth-century England and France. Emerging from and responding to these particular socio-political and cultural backgrounds, the nineteenth-century English and French *Bildungsroman* provides a useful framework against which the relationship between the individual and society can be analysed, as well as a barometer for dominant cultural preoccupations and anxieties. According to James Schmidt, the term *Bildung* was used by sixteenth and seventeenth-century German philosophers, including Böhme and Leibniz, to 'denote the development or "unfolding" of certain possibilities within an organism'. (Schmidt 1996: 630) This implies that each individual harbours a certain potential towards which the development of their faculties will drive them. The course of progress towards the potential of an individual cannot take place in a vacuum, however; it relies in no small part upon the context in which the individual must develop.

Marc Redfield, in his discussion of the *Bildungsroman*, describes the process of *Bildung* as 'the gradual acculturation or socialisation of a self', reflecting the individual's movement from an insular origin towards an eventual accommodation by exterior society. (Redfield 1994: 17) Redfield's summary chimes with the perspective of the Prussian philosopher and government official Wilhelm von Humboldt, who was writing on the subject in the 1790s. When Humboldt became an education official in Prussia in 1809, he envisaged that *Bildung* could form the basis of a reformed system of national education, which would concentrate on the cultivation of the specific talents of the individual. By shifting the emphasis of

education from the objectives of the state to the benefit of the person, Humboldt proposed a more 'liberal' system which offered an alternative to a 'utilitarian' education directed by state interests. He considered that the fulfilment of *Bildung* was 'the ultimate task of our existence' — a task which comprised 'the linking of the self to the world' through 'vital activity'. (Humboldt 1999: 58) In order for such a process to take its course and for society to reap the benefits of human development, Humboldt argued that 'an ampler range of freedom for human forces, and a richer diversity of circumstances and situations' were required. (1854: 4) His assessment indicates the importance he attributed to social conditions for the optimal development of the individual's 'vigour', 'diversity' and 'originality', concepts which he considered to be of paramount importance to the advancement of civilisation: '[men] cannot aspire to still loftier heights save through the development of individuals'. (1854: 13, 65)

From these various ideas, it can be understood that a process of *Bildung* entails the development and education of the individual *within* a certain social context with the eventual objective of integration. While the *Bildungsroman* genre can loosely be thought of as 'the novel of education', its parameters are widely debated. The term did not come into popular usage until the early twentieth century when Wilhelm Dilthey applied it to Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (1796). This was later widely appreciated as the first example of the *Bildungsroman* genre which, in Dilthey's opinion, celebrated 'the optimism of personal development'. (Dilthey 1985: 336) Although Dilthey's evaluation does not acknowledge the irony of Goethe's text, it gained popular acceptance. (see Steinecke 1991: 93) According to Dilthey, in the German *Bildungsroman*, '[l]ife's dissonances and conflicts appear as necessary transitions to be withstood by the individual on his way towards maturity and harmony'. (Dilthey 1985: 336) The

setbacks the protagonist experiences eventually lead to a stage in his development where 'he is about to act decisively in the world'. (Dilthey 1985: 343) In other words, in the traditional German *Bildungsroman*, as represented primarily by *Wilhelm Meister*, social acceptance permits the protagonist both freedom and agency, demonstrating not only that hardships, errors and 'life's dissonances' can be overcome, but that they are a requisite of personal progress.

James N. Hardin draws on the work of Jürgen Jacobs and Markus Krause to provide the following definition of the *Bildungsroman* genre: it links 'the intellectual and social development of a central figure who, after going out into the world and experiencing both defeats and triumphs, comes to a better understanding of self and to a generally affirmative view of the world'. (Hardin 1991: xiii) This presupposes that social accommodation can take place in spite of the errors made by the protagonist and reflects the optimism of personal development lauded by Dilthey. It entails what Abel, Hirsch and Langland refer to as 'organic growth' which 'assumes the possibility of individual achievement and social integration'. (1983: 5) This implies that the fusion of the individual and society is a natural process, and it anticipates an arrival at a mutual understanding and acceptance between the two parties. As the sketch of the educational landscape at the beginning of this introduction shows, in the context of nineteenth-century England and France, men were educated to inhabit the public sphere as active participants in society and its government, whereas women were expected to fulfil domestic functions within the private sphere. The situation was similar in Germany. For this reason, the protagonist of the traditional German *Bildungsroman* was male, as autonomy, experience and the freedom to develop were the preserves of men. Because the general process of *Bildung* entails the acquisition of knowledge, leading the protagonist from the realms of the 'unknown' to the 'known', the traditional model

of the *Bildungsroman* often gives an overall impression of linear development. (see Minden 1997: 1) If, however, the focal point is shifted from a man, towards whom society's institutions and privileges are orientated, to a woman, whose destiny is thought to lie in servitude within the confines of the home, it is unsurprising that this journey of self-development and social acceptance might be more fraught. As Abel, Hirsch and Langland note, 'successful *Bildung* requires the existence of a social context that will facilitate the unfolding of inner capacities', however, '[e]ven the broadest definitions of the *Bildungsroman* presuppose a range of social options available only to men'. (1983 6, 7) In a social context that demanded the renunciation of the female self and denied women the right to error and experience, what is to be done when a woman finds that she is unable to conform to convention?

The female *Bildungsroman* genre aptly captures the complexities that stood in the way of the full development of the nineteenth-century female protagonist, as it shines a spotlight on the hindrances to harmonious socialisation. Although George Sand's *Valentine* (1832), Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1856) and Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* (1895) were not self-consciously written as *Bildungsromane*, they contain many elements and features that conform to the genre conventions. These will be explored in depth in the following chapters. Reading them through a *Bildungsroman* lens, moreover, allows for a focused comparative thematic analysis of the novels' criticism of the socially condoned channels of education for women. Their representations of the obstacles stacked against a linear, 'affirmative' or 'optimistic' course of female development reflect the concerns of the nineteenth-century women's movement in England and France.

As previously mentioned, critics have been unable to reach a consensus as to the exact parameters of the *Bildungsroman* genre. As Hardin states, 'most traditional definitions of the Bildungsroman consider an accommodation between the individual and society an essential characteristic of the genre', which indicates that a *Bildungsroman* can only be classed as such if the protagonist's *Bildung* culminates in successful socialisation. (Hardin 1991: xxi) Such success necessarily entails compliance, compromise or lenience. Similarly, although Jeffrey L. Sammons asserts that the *Bildungsroman* 'should have something to do with *Bildung*', his perspective diverges from Hardin's statement: 'It does not much matter whether the process of *Bildung* succeeds or fails, whether the protagonist achieves an accommodation with life and society or not. (Sammons 1991: 41) In Sammons's view, the success or failure of the *Bildung* itself is of less importance to the definition of the genre than the context. As such, his advice is to 'circumscribe the applicability of the term by keeping it within its historical and especially its ideological limits'. (42) Harmut Steinecke, on the other hand, is of the view that including 'the impossibility of *Bildung* and its parody' within the genre would render it 'far too general'. (Steinecke 1991: 94) Instead, he proposes the term 'Individualroman', which would address both the development of the individual and the 'possibilities the society of a period offers the individual for the unfolding of his or her unique personality'. (94-5) While this proposition is refreshingly inclusive of both genders and could entail narratives of failed *Bildung*, introducing a separate genre for the concept of failure perhaps poses a barrier to comparison. Furthermore, when considering the *Bildungsroman* from a feminist perspective, a genre that assumes male liberties is useful for exposing inequalities. These arguments could prevent novels with female protagonists from being considered within the framework, but this would deprive critics of a

compelling comparative dimension and a valuable perspective on the experience of the nineteenth-century woman. Refusal to consider diverse female perspectives within the genre denotes an exclusivity which could be considered comparable to patriarchal attitudes that limit the female remit.

In the words of M. M. Bakhtin, the special theme of the *Bildungsroman* is 'the image of *man in the process of becoming*', highlighting the concept of evolution which eventually allows him to 'emerge[] *along with the world*'. (Bakhtin 1986: 19, 23) While this idea does provide the impression of the world being in a state of flux, it insinuates that the emergence of the world and the emergence of man are parallel processes that can take place simultaneously and harmoniously. Aleksandar Stević develops this idea in his recent analysis of the genre in the nineteenth century: 'the process of becoming someone [...] is always contested, invariably caught up in fundamental and often irresolvable disputes about the available ways of living'. (Stević 2020: 2) Stević posits the defining characteristic of the nineteenth-century *Bildungsroman* as being 'the crisis of individual development', in which the development is 'inverted and frustrated or, at the very least, put under extreme pressure'. (2, 1) His inclusive approach to the genre is most suited to the purposes of this research, as he recognises the difficulties of becoming someone in a century characterised by change, validates the experience of the male *and* female protagonist and focuses on the social criticism the novels offer. In Stević's view, inclusivity shapes a more useful genre than exclusivity: 'Bildungsroman understood as a genre dealing with diverse modes of modern socialization scores far better: it can accept new members while still maintaining sufficient stability'. (2020: 170-1)

According to Eve Tavor Bannet, the *Bildungsroman* featuring a female protagonist performed a pedagogical function in the eighteenth century, with the

objective of instilling moral values in the mind of the reader. The heroine served as a 'model' rather than a 'warning' and as such, was only permitted one flaw: 'ignorance of the ways of the world'. (Bannet 1991: 205) As Bannet writes, by allowing the heroine to make errors of naivety, 'it was hoped her example would help other young women to avoid [them]'.¹ (206) Such a heroine was 'shown learning the prudence or judgement necessary to guard her in society', however, 'she was incapable of real moral or intellectual development' because, save her vulnerability, she was flawless. (206, 205)

In the nineteenth-century examples that have been selected for this research, the female *Bildungsroman* moves away from the sphere of conduct literature towards a vehicle of social criticism. The term 'female *Bildungsroman*' in this work refers to a novel featuring a female protagonist that complies with and/or complicates and subverts core features of the genre. *Valentine*, *Jane Eyre*, *Madame Bovary* and *Jude the Obscure* engage critically with the various barriers opposing female development in its numerous forms, including: the obstacles to intellectual cultivation; expectations of marriage and the repression of female desire; male property rights; financial and aspirational dependence upon men; the limitations of class; and the pervading threat of manipulation by men, facilitated by a lack of female experience. What emerges from study of these texts is that the restrictions placed on female development and experience render women more likely to commit socially reprehensible errors from which they are unable to recover. These specific texts were chosen primarily because they all either explicitly depict or provide references to the formal education provision for women around their time of publication: *Valentine* and *Madame Bovary* provide criticisms

¹ The examples mentioned by Bannet include *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796) by Mary Hays, *Emmeline* (1788) by Charlotte Smith and Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), published at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

of the French convent and *Jane Eyre* and *Jude the Obscure* offer representations of the English boarding school and Teacher Training College which cast aspersions on the management of such institutions.

Furthermore, all four novels address the development and expression of female desire as an integral part of the protagonists' education. The common nineteenth-century assumption, however, was that women were naturally passionless. Then-contemporary advocates of this concept included the English doctor, William Acton, who wrote that 'a modest woman seldom desires any sexual gratification for herself. She submits to her husband, but only to please him; and, but for the desire of maternity, would far rather be relieved from his attentions'. (Acton 1862: 102) Women who do not adhere to this idea, he dismisses as 'loose' or 'vulgar'. (102) As authoritative figures such as Acton gained the concept credibility, it was assumed that a sexual awakening was not a dominant feature of female development, and, where female desire was expressed, it could be considered as a form of prostitution. As can be inferred from Acton's argument, for women, sex was an act of self-renunciation only to be performed within marriage as a means of pleasing husbands and for purposes of procreation. In other words, sex within this context was admissible because it formed part of the fulfilment of the female role. Similar ideas were also expressed by Proudhon, who estimated that marriage was 'l'organe même de la justice'; outside of this institution, in Proudhon's view, 'il n'y a pour la femme que honte et prostitution'. (Proudhon 1875: 9, 52) The broader implications of marriage as an instrument of social control are evident here. Having understood the prevalence of such arguments in the nineteenth century, it becomes clear how the assertion of a sexual female identity could be considered a threat to the establishment.

This considered, all four texts provide examples of a subversive female sexuality. Valentine experiences a sexual awakening within nature which disrupts both the patriarchy and class structures in Sand's novel; Jane Eyre realises that her passion must be accommodated within matrimony; Emma Bovary searches beyond the limits of marriage for the passion she reads of in novels; and Sue Bridehead represses sexual feelings in order to retain her social and intellectual liberties. Additionally, each of the novelists includes at least two romantic interests for their protagonists, which provides further justification for the texts being read as *Bildungsromane*, as at least two sexual encounters are generally required by the traditional model. (see Buckley 1974: 17) In all but *Jane Eyre*, marriage signals dissatisfaction, the loss of freedom or an awakening to the limits of womanhood; this suggests that the condoned path for women does not, in all cases, result in gratification, from which it can be inferred that these authors did not subscribe to the belief that marriage was the universal objective of female fulfilment. Even though Jane ends her narrative as a wife, she does not commit to marriage at the expense of her health or integrity, which indicates the importance Brontë attributed to the female as an independent entity. Through their depictions of the angst and frustration brought about by unhappy marriages, Sand, Flaubert and Hardy imply critical attitudes towards the permanence of the contract. In demonstrating the strength of social and sexual coercion the protagonists encounter, all four novels dramatise the tensions that arise when women cannot reconcile their personal aspirations to the requisites of social respectability. By centralising the experience of the woman, the novelists invite the reader to consider events from her perspective: it is thus that they validate the female experience and encourage the reader to question the double standard.

Although the novelists may not have expressed official support for nineteenth-century feminism, the criticism of then-current structural, financial and psychological obstacles to accessing education conveyed by their novels establishes a connection to arguments expressed by figures affiliated to the women's movement. Mary Wollstonecraft, for example, famously opposed Rousseau's assessment of the function of women being to please men in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, published in 1792:

Supposing woman to have been formed only to please, and be subject to man, the conclusion is just, she ought to sacrifice every other consideration to render herself agreeable to him: and let this brutal desire of self-preservation be the grand spring of all her actions, when it is proved to be the iron bed of fate, to fit which her character should be stretched or contracted, regardless of all moral or physical distinctions. (Wollstonecraft 2008: 151)

In Rousseau's view, '[t]out ce qui caractérise le sexe doit être respecté comme établi par [la nature]', but here, Wollstonecraft emphasises the way in which the demands of subjugation force the repression of the female nature. (Rousseau 2009: 524) Her assessment of the act of self-renunciation denotes the brutality involved in forcing oneself to conform to expectations for which one is *not* naturally suited. Such is the torturous conclusion to Sue Bridehead's narrative; having rejected convention, she forces herself into subjection as a means of repentance, which signals the loss of the freedoms that she fought fervently to preserve. By presenting the agony involved in Sue's conformity, Hardy encourages the reader to recognise the validity of the widow Edlin's words, which echo Wollstonecraft's argument: "I don't think you ought to force your nature. No woman ought to be

expected to”’. (Hardy 2016: 321) This raises distinct doubts as to the possibilities for the success of female *Bildung* when socialisation requires the stifling of an individual nature.

The rejection of female submission as a law of nature also emerged in the work of Harriet Taylor Mill in the middle of the century. In *Enfranchisement of Women* (1851), she made the case for equality by asserting that natural inclinations do not need to be written into statute: ‘if the preference [for female degradation] be natural, there can be no necessity for enforcing it by law’. (Mill 1868: 20) She rejected the patriarchal enforcement of sexual inequalities in all spheres, stating in no uncertain terms: ‘In all things the presumption ought to be on the side of equality’. (6) Mill refutes the idea that women should be barred from politics and the public sphere on the grounds that such participation would be ‘*unfeminine*’, arguing instead that any individual should strive to fulfil their utmost potential: ‘The proper sphere for all human beings is the largest and highest which they are able to attain to’. (8) The value Mill attributes to individual development indicates a dismissive attitude towards the limits artificially imposed by class and gender, suggesting her support for the process of *Bildung*, although she may not have understood it as such. The criticisms of the ‘separate spheres’ argument that Mill makes also emerge in the novels under study. In all four novels, the protagonists are limited by both class and gender and struggle to fulfil their desires within the confines of their restrictions. In *Jane Eyre*, Brontë articulates Jane’s rebellion against the female remit explicitly:

it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that [women] ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings [...]. It is thoughtless to condemn them [...] if they seek to do more

or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex. (Brontë 2000: 109)

By exposing Jane's frustrations towards the limitations of her prospects, Brontë demonstrates that women are not necessarily content in a life of domestic retirement; just like men, 'they must have action' through which to develop and execute their potential. (109) Although both Jane and Sue depend on the fruits of their intellect and skills for their livelihood, it is equally, if not more important for them to find means of sating their fierce intellectual curiosity. As such, they provide literary examples of the type of woman Josephine Butler referred to in *The Education and Employment of Women* (1868): 'for many women to get knowledge is the only way to get bread', but in numerous cases, the 'instinctive craving for light [...] is stronger than the craving for bread'. (2001: 72) In these cases, the intellect is presented not only as a *means* of survival, but as a *requisite* of survival, which asserts cognitive development as a vital female instinct.

Through their characterisation of Jane Eyre and Sue Bridehead, Brontë and Hardy present examples of the force of the female intellect, contesting then-contemporary views that claimed the inferiority of female intelligence. The scope and depth of the skills they develop render it difficult to deny the potential benefits of the practical application of such talents within the public sphere, should they be allowed the opportunity. John Stuart Mill expressed a similar lamentation of society's failure to make use of the resources harboured by women, deeming that 'the loss to the world, by refusing to make use of one-half of the whole quantity of the talent it possesses, is extremely serious'. (Mill 1989: 199) In his work, *The Subjection of Women* (1869), he states that the remedy to this failure is the 'complete intellectual education of women', which would facilitate their action

within the public sphere: 'Women in general would be brought up equally capable of understanding business, public affairs, and the higher matters of speculation'. (199) Influenced by Humboldt's view that the advancement of civilisation lies in the cultivation of the individual, Mill suggests the broader social importance of female *Bildung*, which is alluded to in the novels.

While Valentine and Emma Bovary do not display the same intellectual capacities as Jane and Sue, they are not depicted as being devoid of intelligence or incapable of development. Sand suggests Valentine's skills as a teacher or a nurse, and Flaubert alludes to Emma's dormant potential through the prizes she wins at her convent, her boundless imagination and the craft behind her deception. It follows that either of these women would have benefited from the provision of an 'intellectual education' as proposed by Mill. Valentine bemoans the superficial education offered by her convent and Emma learns little of substance at her own, leaving with little more than an enhanced inclination to seduction. Such depictions of the futility of the education available to women in France concur with the views expressed by mid-century French advocates of women's liberation. Jenny D'Héricourt, for instance, publicly resisted Proudhon and Michelet in *La Femme Affranchie* (1860), in which she openly criticised the arguments of both men, as well as the limits imposed on women's access to education: 'l'éducation publique leur est refusée, les grandes écoles professionnelles fermées; celles qui, par leur intelligence, égalent les plus intelligents d'entre vous [les hommes] ont eu vingt fois plus de difficultés et de préjugés à vaincre'. (2017: 98) Her rebuttal dismisses assertions of the lack of female cognitive ability and criticises the obstacles mounted against the pursuit of women's intellectual development. Writing in 1858, the political author, Juliette Adam, adopted a similar stance in opposition to Proudhon's misogynistic outlook: 'quoi qu'en dise M. Proudhon, on a une tête et

quelque chose dedans'. (1858: 107) She presented a specific defence of a woman's capability to develop on a par with men, the effect of which was to contest the validity of Proudhon's 'separate spheres' stance:

la femme est un être libre qui se développe jusqu'à la maturité intellectuelle tout comme l'homme; [...] elle peut s'élever à la compréhension des idées générales et des intérêts généraux par l'application et l'exercice de ses facultés; [...] elle peut progresser indéfiniment. (105)

She argued in favour of equal rights and opportunities for the development of the intellectual side of female *Bildung* and, like the English reformers, suggests that the outcome of this development could prove profitable to society. Through analysis of both the defence and rejection of the socially condoned roles for women in both countries, female education and development emerge as pivotal elements of the broader social concerns of nineteenth-century feminism.

This thesis examines the ways in which representations of education in *Valentine*, *Jane Eyre*, *Madame Bovary* and *Jude the Obscure* affect the *Bildung* of the female protagonist. In this research, 'education' is understood to consist not only of formal education provided by the French convent and the English boarding school and Training College, but also of self-education, the cultivation of skills and accomplishments and the more insidious education imparted by parents, guardians and romantic suitors. This research has been structured in order to provide an insight into the dual facets of *Bildung*: on the one hand, the development of the internal faculties of the individual, including the cultivation of the intellect, skills, desires and the evolution of self-knowledge, and on the other, the external influences of socialisation which dictate the extent to which the

protagonist's *Bildung* can be fulfilled. As such, the first three chapters analyse the channels through which learning takes place as an active pursuit: Chapter One addresses the representations of formal education in the novels; Chapter Two examines the self-education and reading undertaken by the protagonists; and Chapter Three explores the development and application of skills and accomplishments. The final two chapters analyse the social forces more specifically: Chapter Four discusses the influence of parents, guardians and female communities and Chapter Five considers the impact of romantic relationships and marriage on the overall course of the protagonists' *Bildung*. A more detailed discussion of male *Bildung*, as represented by the protagonists' male counterparts, has also been included in Chapter Five. This final chapter also addresses the concept of intellectual connections as a force of equalisation between the sexes and the classes.

Apart from the attention these authors pay to formal education for girls and the acknowledgement of desire as an intrinsic aspect of female formation, these novels have also been selected as they centralise the plight of the individual woman and thereby enlist readers' sympathy for the female dissident. As such, through these novels, the authors encourage readers to question the double standard and the mechanisms and motives that fuel the establishment. Additionally, all four novels consider the development of the female protagonist in such a way that lends itself to an analysis of *Bildung*; by pitting the desires, ambitions and crises of the individual woman against the pressures, assumptions and expectations of external society, the friction between organic personal growth and the (im)possibility of social acceptance is dramatised. It is thus that these novels provide a critical representation of the educational provision and developmental opportunities for women and the female *Bildungsroman* emerges

as a vehicle of social critique. The consideration of one novel which largely adheres to the structure of the traditional male *Bildungsroman* (*Jane Eyre*) allows for further comparison, on one hand between Brontë's novel and those by the other authors whose texts subvert the linear process of development, and on the other, between *Jane Eyre* and the male model, which illuminates the compromise necessary for the female protagonist to mature and integrate without considerable self-sacrifice.

As representations of nineteenth-century female education are the primary focus of this research, canonical authors have been selected in order to gauge the consequences of such education as imagined by some of the most celebrated and debated novelists of the century. While, evidently, the works of Brontë, Flaubert and Hardy in particular have remained subjects of critical interest to the present day by virtue of their literary quality and historical value, this thesis aims to contribute to the field by demonstrating the additional value of considering these novels as female *Bildungsromane*, thereby justifying an inclusive approach to a traditionally exclusive genre. Although Sand was a prolific novelist of the period, her legacy derives predominantly from her personal celebrity as an unconventional woman operating in a male sphere as opposed to her literary acclaim. As her novels, in comparison to those of the other novelists, have been subject to far less literary scrutiny, the consideration of *Valentine* in this research provides an original yet valuable case study which offers a fresh point of comparison against which to consider the more famous novels.

While it was not the objective of this research to explicitly compare novels written by male and female authors on the basis of the novelists' gender, striking a balance by including works by two male and two female authors was important in order to see whether any significant differences in the representations of female

Bildung emerged. Both Sand and Brontë write from the perspective of having lived experience of the French Convent and English Boarding School respectively, whereas Flaubert and Hardy's representations of female education are responses to environments and situations which they had not experienced first-hand. They do, however, offer useful critical reflections on the reputation and consequences of the contemporary approach to the methods and purposes of educating women.

As has been touched upon in this introduction, there were many political and historical parallels between England and France in the nineteenth century which render them interesting case studies for this comparative research on female education. The fear and memory of revolution pervaded the politics of both countries from the beginning of the century, meaning that attempts to challenge the established social structures were met with suspicion and hostility. In France, the revolutions of 1830, 1848 and 1871 hindered the smooth acquisition of women's rights as stricter measures were implemented as a means to control the population following social uprising. (see Moses 1984: ix, 38-9, 229) In England, although revolution was not experienced in the same way, the threat of social unrest had the effect of 'detach[ing] sexual egalitarianism from the new canons of middle-class respectability'. (Taylor 2016: 15) It was only from the middle of the century that momentum began to gather, aided by figures such as Harriet Taylor Mill and Josephine Butler in England and Jenny D'Héricourt and Juliette Adam in France, and educational opportunities for women gradually began to broaden. The nineteenth century thus provides a useful canvas against which to consider the holistic development of the female protagonist. It was a period of transition between tradition and modernity in England and France which saw the novel genre rise from being primarily a source of entertainment to an arena in which contemporary issues could be explored.

The Hardy quotation used to title this thesis is taken from Jude's speech towards the end of the novel. In a display of exasperation towards Sue's conversion to conformity, he desolately exclaims: 'Is a woman a thinking unit at all, or a fraction always wanting its integer?', which captures the opposing attitudes towards women's intellectual capacities at the time of the novel's publication in 1895. (Hardy 2016: 285) It is an apt quotation to introduce this research as it encapsulates a number of considerations within it. Apart from raising doubt as to the existence of the female intellect, it alludes also to the idea of development. The fraction/integer dichotomy can be understood in terms of *Bildung*: it is not until an individual has undergone a full course of personal formation and been integrated into society that they can truly be considered as 'whole' or 'fully-formed'. It follows that prior to this holistic development and social accommodation, the individual is but a fraction of that which they have the potential to become. Of course, as the trajectory of female development was more inhibited than that of men, women's ability to become 'whole' or to reach their potential was thrown into greater doubt. Indeed, despite Sue's initial self-assertion, the circularity of her development, culminating in a renunciation of her autonomy, attests to the difficulty of reconciling the forthright female self with a harmonious social existence.

This leads to a further interpretation of the line in light of the disparity between male and female development as explored by this thesis. Despite the intellectual superiority that Sue displays throughout the novel, her reversion to convention leads Jude to a rhetorical questioning of her abilities. His basis for doing so is that he sees their remaining together as the obvious and natural reaction to the death of their children. His instinct is to persevere against the odds, implying an inclination towards a process of trial and error which is integral to male *Bildung* and will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter Five. His failure to

comprehend the decision that Sue feels she is forced to make underscores the male privilege inherent in society; whereas Sue views the loss of her children as a punishment for the self-indulgence for which she must repent, aided by his renewed employment opportunities and a seemingly clear slate, Jude sees it as an unfortunate mistake that can be overcome, just as he has his past misdemeanours. Finally, this line evokes the pure frustration felt by Jude at the loss of his soulmate and intellectual inspiration. As such, Hardy articulates the tragedy of the loss of the female intellect on both a personal and societal level, echoing the arguments asserted by J. S. Mill in the middle of the century.

The research has been carried out using a combination of perspectives from feminist criticism, *Bildungsroman* genre theory, historical analysis and detailed close readings of the novels. Its originality is derived from cross-cultural comparison, an approach to education that encompasses both formal and informal formative experiences and its contribution to an enhanced understanding of the *Bildungsroman* featuring a female protagonist. Particular attention is paid to the respective socio-cultural contexts from which these representations emerge and how they may have shaped the different aesthetic responses to pedagogic realities, professional possibilities, and personal development at the time. Considering education as a process of *Bildung* facilitates an understanding of the interplay between internal cultivation and external socialisation and provides precious insight into the nineteenth-century movement towards gender equality in England and France.

Chapter One: Formal Education

'Why is the life of a modest woman a perpetual conflict?' (Wollstonecraft 2008: 155) Mary Wollstonecraft's answer to her rhetorical question cites the education that women received to prepare themselves for their socially condoned roles as wives and mothers as being the linchpin of their servitude: 'when sensibility is nurtured at the expense of the understanding, such weak beings must be restrained by arbitrary means [...]; but give their activity of mind a wider range, and nobler passions and motives will govern their appetites and sentiments'. (155) Wollstonecraft presents herself as an opponent of a utilitarian system of education that hinders women's development in order to prepare them solely for a life of domesticity; this disinclination to cultivate or even acknowledge the existence of women's intellectual capability or professional ambition ensures their dependence and substantiates claims to female weakness being inherent. Her proposals on women's education formed an intrinsic part of her campaign for women's rights which laid the foundations for advocates of a more 'liberal' education for women over the course of the nineteenth century.

A discussion of *Valentine*, *Jane Eyre*, *Madame Bovary* and *Jude the Obscure* as female *Bildungsromane* necessitates an understanding of the formal provisions of female education in England and France in a century characterised by accelerating change, not least in the field of education. In the 1790s, Wilhelm von Humboldt envisaged that an ideal system of national education would prioritise the development of the individual for their personal benefit as opposed to 'train[ing] [them] up from childhood with the express view of becoming a citizen'. (1854: 66) In Humboldt's view, an education system which grants the individual freedom enough for *Bildung* to unfold and unlock their potential is the route to national

prosperity; it follows that 'all institutions which act in any way to obstruct or thwart this development, and compress men together into vast uniform masses, are [...] hurtful', both to the individual and the state. (65)

As can be inferred, however, from the objections Mary Wollstonecraft posed to Jean-Jacques Rousseau at the end of the eighteenth century, women and girls were being instructed precisely to render them part of the masses who knew their place as dependants and servants in the social and political hierarchies and would thus easily fall under the patriarchal control of their husbands and the state. Given his influence on Romanticism and the importance he places on the development of his male subject, *Émile*, one is surprised to find Rousseau among the ranks of proponents of a utilitarian model of education for women. Yet, his arguments rely upon the assumption that women are defined by an inherent 'faiblesse', requiring them to be governed by 'contrainte habituelle [...] puisqu'elles ne cessent jamais d'être assujetties ou à un homme, ou aux jugements des hommes'. (Rousseau 2009: 536, 534) As such, on the subject of the education of women, he advises: 'Toutes les réflexions des femmes [...] doivent tendre à l'étude des hommes ou aux connaissances agréables qui n'ont que le goût pour objet'. (560) Rousseau's belief that all education should be geared towards the needs of men was in keeping with the educational status quo that Wollstonecraft ardently contested. Rather than training women to please by rendering them 'beautiful, innocent, and silly', she encourages them to 'explode' an imposed system of education which debilitates them: 'let us endeavour to strengthen our minds by reflection [...]; let us not confine all [...] our knowledge to an acquaintance with our lovers' or husbands' hearts; but let the practice of every duty be subordinate to the grand one of improving our minds'. (2008: 162, 166) The same spirit of self-improvement is

echoed by Brontë in *Jane Eyre*, reflecting Wollstonecraft's continuing relevance to the movement for women's education over the course of the nineteenth century.

The inequalities of educational opportunity can be seen in a number of nineteenth-century measures in England and France, such as the provision of state schooling. In England, girls only had sporadic access to primary education until Forster's Education Act of 1870 when the state began to monitor the numbers of children in each area and build schools where there were no pre-existing religious schools to accommodate them. Prior to this increased state control of education, some children attended dame schools, which were run by working class women from their homes; others attended charity schools set up by the churches, which taught practical skills. In this type of school, to a certain extent, the content of boys' and girls' education was similar: they learnt to read, were instructed in religion and sometimes writing and maths. Girls were additionally taught needlework. Following the foundation of the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church (1811) and the British and Foreign School Society (1808), National and British schools were open to middle- and working-class children, but in reality, very few working class girls attended due to other work and family commitments. (see Steinbach 2005: 177-80) Although National and British schools 'were considered to provide the best education available to poor children', they taught with a view to training girls to 'accept their station in life' so that they would become 'docile and able domestic workers'. (180)

Even after Forster's Act, not all girls attended primary school until the introduction of the subsequent Education Act of 1880, which made school compulsory for boys and girls aged five to ten. Although more girls gained access

to primary education following the 1870 Act, the education they obtained in the state schools was 'by no means gender-neutral'; boys and girls often attended the same state schools, but were taught in separate classrooms, played in separate playgrounds and had separate entrances. (Steinbach 2005: 183) The utilitarian approach to the girls' curriculum is evidenced by the state's provision of financial incentives to study domestic economy, which saw a sharp rise in interest in the subject in the state's Board Schools: in 1874, 844 girls enrolled, but by 1882, this figure had reached 59,812. (183) This is the background against which Jane Eyre and Sue Bridehead's education should be read. The minimal provision throws their achievement and potential into sharper relief in a period in which women continued to be trained for domesticity even after official state intervention.

Sand's *Valentine* and Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* provide representations of convent schooling, which functioned outside the parameters of state control, although in France, the state started to take an interest in education much earlier than in England. Napoleon's Civil Code was instated in 1804 as a means to unify laws after the Revolution, and education was centralised from 1808, although primary education remained the responsibility of the Catholic Church. (see Foley 2004: 21) Under the Guizot law of 1833 and the Falloux laws of 1850 and 1851, a primary school was to be established in every commune to cater for the growing population of young people. The Guizot Law provided for boys without making any provision for girls and despite the Pellet Law of 1836 decreeing that girls should also be included in formal education plans, the law was not strictly enforced. (see McMillan 2000: 59) Girls only featured more centrally on the agenda of the 1850 Falloux Law which stated that there should be a girls' primary school in every commune in which the population exceeded 800 people; this law was subsequently extended by Victor Duruy in 1867 to apply to communes of 500

people. (59) Primary schooling was not offered free of charge, however, until the instatement of the Ferry Laws in 1881; a subsequent Ferry Law in 1882 made school compulsory for all children aged six to thirteen, two years after the 1880 Act in England. (145)

Jules Ferry also took greater pains to raise the standard of girls' education by stipulating that each department must provide a training school for female primary teachers. (145) Previously, the Falloux Law had made an attempt to implement a level of standardisation in girls' education, but its failure to distinguish between primary and secondary schooling for girls somewhat undermined these efforts. (see Bellaigue 2007: 32) They were further undermined by the fact that members of religious orders could substitute a *lettre d'obédience* from their superiors for the the *brevet de capacité* teaching certificate, a qualification that had been required by all female lay teachers from 1819. (see Clark 1984: 8 and Bellaigue 2007: 32) Between 1850 and 1853, 60 per cent of the schools for girls that had been established following the Falloux Laws were entrusted to religious orders, which leads one to question the suitability of many of the teachers. (see Clark 1984: 11)

It is unsurprising that this negligent attitude towards teaching standards, combined with a curriculum that made minimal demands on the intellect, led Jules Simon to criticise the educational provision for girls in 1867 as being 'incomplete [...] including nothing serious or edifying'. (cited in Bellaigue 2007: 166) Apart from significant attention to religious study, programmes largely shared an aim for young women to 'be familiar with the humanities, have a smattering of knowledge about the natural sciences, be able to converse in foreign languages, be competent with needle and thread, and possess a certain number of talents'. (Rogers 2005: 183) The account that Sand provides of her own experience of the convent regime confirms that neither the curriculum nor the teachers' expectations

encouraged her to challenge herself. She spent her time 'ne faisant quoi que ce soit, si ce n'est d'apprendre un peu d'italien, un peu de musique, un peu de dessin, le moins possible, en vérité'. (Sand 2004: 387) English was the only subject to which she applied herself, but she admits that the motives behind these efforts were rather more social than academic. (387) The inference that can be drawn is that Sand's experience was representative of convent schooling in that it trained women to take up socially condoned roles. At the end of her schooling, she was presented with the option of marriage, to satisfy her grandmother's wishes, or taking the veil, both of which were predicated on subservience. (426-7)

In England, secondary education for girls was not widely available in the first half of the nineteenth century, but the establishment of Queen's College in 1848 began to change the landscape. Mary Francis Buss and Dorothea Beale are counted among its early alumnae and subsequently went on to open their own establishments, Buss founding North London Collegiate School for Ladies in 1850, and Beale Cheltenham Ladies' College in 1858. These events were the catalyst for further development, inspiring the foundation of the Girls' Public Day School Trust in 1872, which by 1898 had established thirty-four schools around the country. (see Steinbach 2005: 185) Despite these advances, however, secondary schooling for girls was subject to scrutiny. In 1865, the Schools Inquiry Commission found that middle-class female education comprised 'a vast deal of dry, uninteresting work' which demonstrated 'a tendency to fill rather than to strengthen the mind', an impression also conveyed by Brontë in her description of the Lowood school regime, which employs rote learning as its primary pedagogical method. (*cited in* Buss 2001: 141) The question of disparity in teaching standards was raised by Emily Davies, founder of Girton College, in 1878: 'it should not be said that a teacher of boys must of course have a degree, but for a teacher of girls

a Higher Local Certificate will do'. (Davies 2001: 115) Such examples reflect that female schooling was not designed to allow students to reach their academic potential, not least because of the lower expectations of teaching standards. Acceptance into university required Latin and Greek, which dominated the boys' curriculum but was omitted from the girls', attesting to the idea that higher education was a male privilege. (see Thormählen 2007: 121, Richards and Hunt 1950: 354, Young 1977: 86)

This was also an obstacle to female access to higher education in France. After 1863, the Duruy reforms made education for girls more secular; fees were reduced and more state schools were opened, which broadened availability. (see Cobban 1965: 190) From 1879 onwards, state-run colleges opened to women, but once again, the curriculum was designed broadly with state purposes in mind. Girls were taught primarily through religious instruction and sewing, while reading, writing and arithmetic were only of secondary importance; boys' education in lycées, on the other hand, focussed on the classics to prepare them for the baccalauréat and subsequently university, which would be followed by 'a life of service to the state'. (McMillan 2000: 58-60) Duruy's reforms present another example of the way in which educational provision was geared towards the needs of men; despite his broadening of secondary schooling for women, his intention was 'never [...] to create parity between girls and boys', but to render them 'more interesting companions for their husbands'. (McMillan 2000: 100-1)

The exclusion of Greek and Latin from the girls' curriculum made attainment of the baccalauréat more difficult than for boys, reflecting the attitude that university remained the preserve of men as these exams were required for matriculation. (see Bidelman 1982: 16) Although some private institutions, such as the Collège Sévigné, began to introduce Latin classes for girls from 1880, it was

not until 1924 that girls could study specifically for the baccalauréat at state schools. (see McMillan 2000: 147, Foley 2004: 174)

Regardless of these obstacles, Julie-Victoire Daubié became the first woman to graduate from a French university after obtaining a bachelor's degree in Lyon in 1861. From this point, women gradually began to attend university in France. In England, women's route to higher education was paved by Emily Davies's founding of Girton College, Cambridge, in 1869; although gradually attendees of the college were permitted to take the same examinations as men, they were not awarded equal degree status until after the Second World War. The founding of Girton ushered in changes for higher education for women in England, with the foundation of Newnham College (1871) and the University of London acquiring authority to award degrees to women (1878). Two years later, it awarded four women BA degrees, making them the first in the UK to reach this status.

The right to a better education featured centrally on the agenda of many women's groups which would later be identified as feminist, including the Langham Place Group and the Suffragettes in England and the Société pour la Revendication du Droit des Femmes in France. It was seen as the key to enhancing women's economic and political independence, which would increase their participation in the public sphere by rendering them capable of working in professions other than those of governess and domestic worker. Following Florence Nightingale's contribution to medical practice in the Crimean War, the London School of Medicine for women was established in 1874. Women began to secure medical training in France too, and by 1914 3% of practising physicians were female. (see Jones 1994: 241) The year 1900 also saw the first woman join the Paris Bar and, according to Lady Jeune, in England the previous year a few women had 'braved the dangers of the bar' as conveyancers, 'opened chambers

of their own, and [were] doing a fair amount of business'. (see Jones 1994: 241, Jeune 1900: 203) Additionally, Lady Jeune stated in a publication of 1900 that women had successfully entered into 'many departments of the Civil Service, The Post Office, Savings Bank, [and] public offices as clerks and typewriters', adding that 'typewriting, photography, carving, modelling [and] designing [were] a few of the trades [then] largely in their hands'. (203) Such development and potential is acknowledged by Hardy in his presentation of Sue Bridehead as a talented metalworker who is able to adapt practical and intellectual skills to any task she is presented with.

The education of women was a highly controversial and politically significant topic which engaged the imagination of numerous nineteenth-century novelists in England and France, including Sand, Brontë, Flaubert and Hardy. As has been evidenced, the idea that women were worthy of an education that went beyond preparing them for the roles of wife, mother and housekeeper only took root very slowly. 'Many persons think that they have sufficiently justified the restrictions on women's field of action', wrote Harriet Taylor Mill in 1851, 'when they have said that the pursuits from which women are excluded are *unfeminine*, and that the *proper sphere* of women is not politics or publicity, but private and domestic'. (1868: 8) Advocates for women's rights like Mill had to fight against established assumptions about appropriate female role models and behaviours, as well as long-held stereotypes on the subject of female capability. Such stereotypes were legally upheld. In England, married women could not own their own property and were not considered legal entities separate from their husbands until the Married Women's Property Act of 1882. In France, married women could not dispose of their own earnings until the 1907 Property Act and were not permitted to work without their husband's consent or open a personal bank account until 1965, over

a hundred years after the publication of *Valentine* (1832) and *Madame Bovary* (1856).

The entanglement of female education with sexual politics, and morality in particular, contributed to its status as a subject of contention. Mary Wollstonecraft contested views expounded by educators such as Rousseau that advocated female ignorance as a means of ensuring their purity and innocence. She argued, on the contrary, that whilst women were being educated simply, as Rousseau put it, 'pour plaire et pour être subjuguée', the content and direction of their education was, ironically, jeopardising the moral health of the British (and French) nation. (Rousseau 2009: 517) Rousseau's emphasis on the importance of the female reputation indicates his view that sound female morality is synonymous with satisfying male expectations, or in other words, pleasing men:

L'homme, en bien faisant, ne dépend que de lui-même, et peut braver le jugement public; mais la femme en bien faisant, n'a fait que la moitié de sa tâche, et ce que l'on pense d'elle ne lui importe pas moins que ce qu'elle est en effet. Il suit de là que le système de son éducation doit être à cet égard contraire à celui de la nôtre. (526)

The difference in his approach to male and female education rests entirely on the double standard: a man can be satisfied in the knowledge that he has acted correctly, whereas a woman's work is doubled in her duty to *appear* morally admissible in the eyes of the patriarchy. Placing women under surveillance is an exercise in control which underlines the hypocrisy of the system. This concept can also be applied to the development of *Bildung*: Rousseau supports the idea of men asserting themselves as individuals against the force of public opinion as a means

of carving their place in the world, yet expects women to submit to their place as public opinion dictates.

Conversely, Wollstonecraft argued: 'till women are more rationally educated the progress of human virtue and improvement in knowledge must receive continual checks'. (Wollstonecraft 2008: 107) In her view, providing women with a superficial education under the apprehension that they are formed 'pour plaire et pour être subjuguée' is counterproductive as it relies upon a consistent and enduring dynamic within marriage which is often unrealistic in practice.

The woman who has only been taught to please will soon find that her charms are oblique sunbeams, and that they cannot have much effect on her husband's heart when they are seen every day, when summer is passed and gone. Will she then have sufficient energy to look into herself for comfort, and cultivate her dormant faculties? or, is it more rational to expect that she will try to please other men [...]?

When the husband ceases to be a lover - and the time will inevitably come, her desire of pleasing will then grow languid, or become a spring of bitterness; and love, perhaps, the most evanescent of all passions, gives place to jealousy or vanity. (93)

Under these circumstances, woman's weakness is born of man's inconsistency, but Wollstonecraft alludes to a remedy: the cultivation of dormant faculties in an effort to preserve 'morality'. For her, this sense of mental cultivation is indispensable in all facets of a woman's life; not only will it establish a stronger sense of equality in the relationship, allowing her to 'become the friend, and not the humble dependant of her husband', but through 'pursuits that interest the head

as well as the heart' (as men are allowed to enjoy), her passions will be tempered, rendering virtue more attainable. (95, 156) She indicates that natural possession of female purity cannot be depended upon if a woman's sole function is to please, as the unoccupied, uncultivated mind is capricious in its inclinations. She poses the question as to whether purity, though desirable, is at all obtainable for women who are left to depend only on 'their senses for employment and amusement, when no noble pursuit sets them above the little vanities of the day, or enables them to curb the wild emotions that agitate a reed over which every passing breeze has power'. (94-5) The logical inference here is that the education provision for women encourages the development of the very defects used to substantiate the claim of female inferiority: if a woman is confined to a trivial existence, it is no surprise that trivialities will engage and affect her and that she will seek stimulation wherever the opportunity is presented, as Flaubert demonstrates through Emma Bovary. Female education is, in Wollstonecraft's view, friend to morality, mediator of natural passions and a benefit to society from the point of view of both husband and wife.

Although Wollstonecraft's arguments in the 1790s were instrumental in broadening women's sphere in the nineteenth century, advocates of the cause faced ardent opposition from sceptics who did not believe women were capable of intellectual endeavour. Male and female commentators on the subject subscribed to the belief that had been expressed earlier by Rousseau: 'quant aux ouvrages de génie, ils passent leur portée'. (Rousseau 2009: 560) In 1865, the English author of educational principles Elizabeth Sewell wrote that a woman's 'health would break down under the effort' of preparing for an Indian Civil Service examination as boys do, estimating that 'not one girl in a hundred would be able to work up the subjects required'. (Sewell 2001: 144) This claim that women were not sufficiently

physiologically robust to withstand intellectual or professional ventures on a par with men gained integrity through scientific acknowledgement, as evidenced in the writings of the British biologist and physiologist George J. Romanes. In 1887, he argued that women's entry into the public sphere with the same opportunities as men would create a 'foolish rivalry [...] for which as a class they are neither physically nor mentally fitted'. (Romanes 2001: 29) In Romanes's view, this inferiority was anatomical and, therefore, inevitable as limits were already inherent in the female body before any intellectual training had begun. Of women's cerebral capacity, he remarks: 'the average brain-weight of women is about five ounces less than that of men,' and therefore, 'we should be prepared to expect a marked inferiority of intellectual power'. (11) He applies the same logic to his analysis of the female body to underline the futility, and perhaps even danger, of attempts to place it under strain that it is not designed to withstand: 'the general physique of women is less robust than that of men - and therefore less able to sustain the fatigue of serious or prolonged brain action'. (11) Such a diagnosis at once exempts and dissuades women from participation in intellectual activity, purportedly for their own good on medical grounds.

This line of argument also featured in debate on the other side of the Channel. One such proponent was politician and philosopher Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, who used his *plus de quantité, plus de puissance* (see 1875: 29) approach to physiology to justify male superiority: 'en fait de raison, de logique, de puissance de lier les idées, d'enchaîner les principes et les conséquences et d'en apercevoir les rapports, la femme, même la plus supérieure, atteint rarement à la hauteur d'un homme de médiocre capacité'. (27) One would expect Proudhon, as an anarchist, to adopt a less conventional view of women than is evidenced here, however, his analysis evokes the hostility of the climate that intellectually curious

women faced. In spite of this, Proudhon was met with resistance from women who rejected the terms on which they were dismissed. A notable example is women's rights activist Jenny P. D'Héricourt, whose engagement with Proudhon's doctrine proved her his worthy adversary and provoked his angry response. On the subject of female aptitude, she writes:

Si, comme on le croit, la femme n'est pas apte à remplir certaines fonctions privées ou publiques, [...] on n'a nul besoin de les lui interdire; si, au contraire, on lui croit l'aptitude [...], en l'empêchant de se manifester, on commet une iniquité, un acte d'odieuse tyrannie. (2017: 357)

The implication is that if women do not have innate abilities, there is no need to bar them from harmless opportunities to use the few they have, but if the reverse is true, attempts to limit them to a designated sphere derive from a fear of their potential. Her powers of logic and persuasion are evident, exposing the flaws in the argument that Proudhon so vehemently defended. In the novels under discussion, the frustrations of the female intellectual are explored by Brontë and Hardy, whose heroines use judgement and reasoning to defend themselves against patriarchal forces, as D'Héricourt does.

In England, the publication of John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women* (1869) reflects the mounting resistance to female exclusion from public life on the basis of physiology. Mill envisages the advantages society would reap if it did not refuse 'to make use of one-half of the whole quantity of talent it possesses' and advocates a 'complete intellectual education of women' which would render them 'equally capable of understanding business, public affairs, and the higher matters of speculation'. (Mill 1989: 199) In Mill's view, '[t]he mere getting rid of the idea that

all the wider subjects of thought and action [...] are men's business, from which women are to be warned off [...] would effect an immense expansion of the faculties of women'. (200) His argument dictates that it is not the woman that is deficient, but the education that she receives, and thus, the cycle of prejudice is perpetuated by society's institutions, hindering both the individual and the state, as Humboldt feared.

The idea that interior cultivation would have significant external advantages whilst at the same time satisfying women's internal thirst for knowledge was another important facet of the argument in favour of equal academic and professional rights for women among female activists. In 1869, Elizabeth Wolstenholme-Elmy argued that denying women higher education would be to deprive humanity and to defy the intentions of God: 'Give us knowledge, power and life. We will repay the gift a hundred-fold'. (Wolstenholme-Elmy 2001: 167) In a similar vein, her fellow women's suffrage campaigner, Millicent Garret Fawcett, lamented the superficiality of female pursuits and, like Mill, deplored the idea of women's potential going needlessly to waste: 'To see a woman of really able mind and power frittering away her life in trifles, is far more melancholy, to my mind, than over-work'. (Fawcett: 2001: 309) Such arguments attest to the growing unrest and increasing prominence of 'The Woman Question' from the middle of the century and affect the cultural climate in which the novels appear. Brontë and Hardy in particular engage with the debate by presenting Jane and Sue as women with indisputable academic talent and an inclination to learn; their potential for professional success is evident and they prove themselves the intellectual equals, if not superiors, of their male counterparts. The sympathetic presentation of female talent and curiosity in these cases leads the reader to conclude that institutionalised attempts to block such women from accessing an education that

benefits their academic potential would indeed constitute, as Jenny D'Héricourt put it, 'un acte d'odieuse tyrannie' for the individual and for society. (2017: 357)

In this chapter, 'formal education' is defined as education received through official establishments. The analysis of *Valentine* also includes discussion of Valentine's pavilion as a reaction against her formal convent schooling and a means through which she implements her own ideas about education. In the novels under consideration, formal education establishments are represented most explicitly through Jane Eyre's boarding school, Emma Bovary's convent and Sue Bridehead's Training College; although Sand references Valentine's convent education, she does not include any scenes of formal establishments within her narrative. Neither Brontë, Flaubert, nor Hardy provide much information regarding the content of the curriculum their protagonists undergo, yet the effect these institutions have on the protagonists' development is significant.

1.1 Jane Eyre and Lowood Institution

Whilst official establishments for girls' education in England were few and far between until Forster's Act of 1870, there is substantial evidence to suggest that small schools were set up, usually with a female teacher, in such a way as to promote 'feminine' domestic values and work. (see Bellaigue 2007: 19-22) Boys' schools were larger and more institutional in nature in order to prepare them for the public sphere and the world of work and business, whereas large establishments for girls were rejected due to their being 'inimical to the development of domestic virtue [and] endanger[ing] a conception of femininity predicated on frailty and dependence'. (Bellaigue 2007: 22) It is widely believed by Brontë scholars that Lowood Institution is based on Charlotte Brontë's own experiences at The Clergy Daughters' School at Cowan Bridge between 1824 and

1825, but it is important to note that this type of education, despite criticisms of its management, was not widely available to girls in 1847 when *Jane Eyre* was published, twenty-three years before Forster's Act and thirty-three years before compulsory primary education for girls passed into statute. (see Bentley 1975: 25, Harman 2015: 40-1, Gaskell 1997: 56) Despite its pledge to give girls 'that plain and useful Education, which may best fit them to return with Respectability and Advantage to their own Homes', Cowan Bridge School, and indeed Lowood, bear closer resemblance to the typical middle-class boys' institutional model of schooling than the intimate domestic model designed for girls. (*cited in* Barker 1997: 5) Although in the first half of the century professional opportunities for women were limited to the roles of teacher or governess, Brontë's school advertised additional, more specialised teaching at extra cost for pupils who had such ambitions or who might be required to support themselves in future: 'If a more liberal Education is required for any who may be sent to be educated as Teachers and Governesses, an extra Charge will probably be made'. (*cited in* Barker: 5) According to Elizabeth Gaskell, the curriculum included: 'history, geography, the use of the globes, grammar, writing and arithmetic, all kinds of needlework, and the nicer kinds of household work - such as getting up fine linen, ironing'. (1997: 50) Records suggest that Charlotte's father, Patrick Brontë, paid the higher fee for her, and two of her sisters, to learn French, music and drawing in order to render their education more complete. (see Harman 2015: 39) This account gives the impression that the content of the schooling that Brontë received was advanced for the time, as it does not reflect the claims of superficiality that were frequently being made twenty or so years later by activists such as Wolstenholme-Elmy and Garret Fawcett.

Though Brontë's presentation of Lowood is disparaging on many levels, the content of the academic instruction received appears to be drawn from her own experience and does not come under direct attack. With regards to teaching methods, despite accounts which deem learning by rote, 'the ubiquitous and ineffectual pedagogy of the age', and biographer, Claire Harman's, assertion that Brontë's own experience of the technique 'grated on [her] nerves', in *Jane Eyre*, Brontë only directly criticises it with reference to routine as opposed to efficacy. (Hilton 2007: 204, Harman 2015: 40) One of Jane's first observations on entering Lowood is the girls' 'whispered repetitions' during their hour of study. (Brontë 2000: 44) On waking the next day, she is struck by the strict routine observed by pupils and staff; a routine which is followed rigorously, particularly where Christian practice is concerned. In spite of Brontë's own Evangelical upbringing, her presentation of these religious drills emphasises the laborious nature of such a task. She writes, 'the day's Collect was repeated' and then continues to employ the passive to present a similar sense of monotony as is imposed on the pupils: 'certain texts of scripture were said [...] a long grace said and a hymn sung'. (45) Jane is clearly clock-watching as she spectates these rituals from the point of view of an outsider who has hitherto been able to choose the content and duration of her own study. Whereas before, reading was her only means of solace under her aunt's roof, at Lowood, spiritual readings are 'protracted' and graces 'long', only punctuated by the 'indefatigable bell' which finally signals a respite in the arduous process which has pushed her to the point of 'inanition'. (45) This tone continues into the academic classes in which repetition is, once again, the order of the day: 'repetitions in history, grammar, &c. went on for an hour [...] The duration of each lesson was measured by the clock, which at last struck twelve'. (48) If this is the point of view adopted by Jane, a naturally interested student, it is clear that this

method of instruction is simply mechanistic; it follows an externally imposed rubric which almost forces the girls to be bystanders in their education, as they are discouraged from mental engagement and can only participate through uniformity and rigour.

Critics, however, are split on this point. Tom Winnifrith's view on rote learning is that the Brontës, even in their own teaching practices, were 'forced' to conform to the established system, whereas Marianne Thormählen argues that the child Jane 'comes to accept, even relish, the setting that subjects her to such rigorous training'. (Winnifrith 2005: 88, Thormählen 2007: 191) Given the staleness of the classroom and the tedium of the routine that Brontë conveys, the argument that she begins to 'relish' Lowood is too strong. While she does eventually become accustomed to the schedule and practices and achieves positive results, Brontë forces the reader to experience the transition from home to school as Jane does through her first-person narrative. Jane is a ten-year-old who has been uprooted from the only home environment she has ever known and placed in another in which everything is foreign; she is then half-starved and subjected to a new timetable punctuated only by the bell and the clock. It is therefore unsurprising that this new environment intimidates and overwhelms her: 'At first, being little accustomed to learn by heart, the lessons appeared to me both long and difficult: the frequent change from task to task, too, bewildered me'. (Brontë 2000: 53) Jane, as an adult, presents these aspects of the routine as obstacles to be overcome as opposed to triggers of nostalgia. It seems more accurate to suggest that Jane, like Brontë in her experience of Cowan Bridge, came to accept that compromise was implicit for a woman in receipt of education. In *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, Elizabeth Gaskell contemplates why Brontë did not resist returning to Cowan Bridge following the deaths of her elder sisters:

Charlotte's earnest vigorous mind saw [...] the immense importance of education, as furnishing her with tools which she had the strength and the will to wield, and she would be aware that the Cowan's Bridge education was [...] the best that her father could provide for her. (1997: 57)

In a climate that was not forthcoming with opportunities for women, Jane, like Brontë, exercises forbearance in the knowledge that receipt of an education will provide deferred gratification, which will eventually outweigh short-term fear, boredom or discomfort.

It is not the laboriousness of the lessons that leaves a lasting impression on the young Jane, however. The blot etched on her memory is more closely related to the conditions and treatment students are subjected to at Lowood, which reinforces the connection with Cowan Bridge. At Lowood, the girls are treated punitively, having to stomach food unsuitable for human consumption. The porridge served for breakfast is described by Jane as a 'nauseous mess' and deemed 'abominable' by a disgusted teacher, confirming that the food was not only rejected by the girls on an adolescent whim. (Brontë 2000: 46) Physical privation pervades all other aspects of the school, which highlights the cruel ways in which Mr Brocklehurst (a fictional incarnation of Carus Wilson, Head of Cowan Bridge, it is said) claims to uphold proper 'Christian' principles such as 'humility' and 'consistency' through 'plain fare, simple attire [and] unsophisticated accommodations'. (Brontë 2000: 34) However modest and reasonable this treatment of poor children may sound, it becomes clear that what he is actually describing is mistreatment in loosely veiled terms. That a girl should be "trained in conformity to her position and prospects", alludes to his intention to perpetuate

their destitution, incarcerating them within the bounds of their class if, of course, nothing more unfortunate befalls them before their sentence is served. (34)

Gaskell highlights the link between Brocklehurst and Carus Wilson, although she concedes that his intentions towards the girls at Cowan Bridge were not as malicious as might be assumed from Brontë's text, as he possessed 'the unlucky gift of irritating even those to whom he meant kindly'. (1997: 58) While Gaskell states that Wilson himself 'ordered in the food, and was anxious that it should be of good quality', she indicates that his superintendence of his establishment failed when concerns as to the quality of the food were raised, appearing more interested in lecturing complainants on his principles: 'his reply was to the effect that children were to be trained up to regard higher things than dainty pampering of the appetite'. (1997: 54-5) According to Gaskell, Wilson was well-meaning, but ignorant of the effects of his approach; in an effort to render the girls 'lowly and humble', he 'constantly remind[ed] [them] of their dependent position'. (1997: 58) It is to be expected that Brontë's dramatisation of her own experience omits the kindlier intentions behind the management of Cowan Bridge, if indeed she was aware of them, particularly as Wilson's negligent management contributed to her sisters' decline. When Mr Brocklehurst is introduced to Jane at Gateshead, Brontë likens him to 'a back pillar [...] standing erect on the rug' like an immovable phallic tyrant whose sanctimonious nature is about to be confirmed. (Brontë 2000: 31) On leaving the Reeds', he places a copy of *The Child's Guide* in Jane's hand, an allusion to Carus Wilson's ironically titled *Children's Friend* magazine, through which he aims to terrify young readers into a God-fearing state with tales describing 'deathbed stories of little children'. (Bentley 1975: 25) While this type of pious literature for children was 'standard fare' at the time, Harman suggests that it

'must have appalled Charlotte Brontë almost as much as it does twenty-first century readers', given her satirical portrayal of it in *Jane Eyre*. (2015: 40)

The same punitive attitude is omnipresent at Lowood in regards to academic, social, domestic and religious upbringing. Jane does not harbour any lasting resentment of the instructive methods *per se*, but she does object to the treatment suffered by Helen Burns at the hands of Miss Scatcherd, who ignores Helen's exceptional ability to retain knowledge of history in favour of attacking her lack of cleanliness which, caused by the frozen water, is no fault of her own. (see Brontë 2000: 53) À propos of this attack, to Jane's astonishment, Helen does not protest; instead, she dutifully fetches the rod with which Miss Scatcherd is to inflict 'a dozen strikes' on her bare neck. (54). Despite being no stranger to punishment, Jane is shocked by this institutionalised violence, which underlines Brontë's criticism of an educational regime that condones brutality. Jane is astounded at the composure with which Helen bears her ill-treatment: 'not a feature of her pensive face altered its ordinary expression.' (54) It is disclosed later that Helen has a singular and accepting attitude to punishment in the grand scheme of life and death, particularly for a child of her age, but even taking this into account, it can be inferred that this violent treatment of pupils is an everyday reality under the Lowood regime.

The authority of teachers and the imposition of discipline are reinforced by a spurious invocation of divine authority. Such a regime invites moral posturing and hypocrisy. In order to reinforce the superiority which he clearly lacks, Mr Brocklehurst uses subjugation and humiliation as tools in his designs to '[train] children for eternity' by his standards. (Birch 2008: 83) Placing Jane upon a stool in front of the whole school, Brocklehurst lives up to his ascribed title of 'dread judge'. (Brontë 2000: 65) He has arrogated to himself the role of God's messenger

and attempts to frighten other children into conformity by making a cruel example of Jane. This is a self-serving act on two levels: firstly, it affords him an occasion to posture in front of pupils to further elevate the status of himself and his family, whom he has brought in tow in elaborate dress. Secondly, the vengeance he seeks through his targeting of Jane following her challenge to his authority at Gateshead demonstrates his pettiness of character. Perceived acts of rebellion on Jane's behalf fuel the fire of Brocklehurst's vengeful nature. In this scene of 'retribution', the 'black marble clergyman' perverts religion in his meting out of justice. (66) He deems Jane, 'a little castaway: not a member of the true flock, but an interloper and an alien' whom peers should 'avoid', 'exclude' and 'shut out'. (66) The phrases 'black pillar' and 'black marble clergyman' reinforce the argument that there is nothing pure about Brocklehurst's use of religion for selfish motives; he assumes authority, but does not adhere to Christian teachings of truth and justice which are fundamental to Jane's personal morality. His failure to uphold the principles that he advocates reveals his hypocrisy and ironically constitutes a subversion of those principles.

The theme of learning by means of repetition and routine can also be examined in relation to the punitive regime that Mr Brocklehurst imposes on the lower echelons of society. Thormählen remarks that '[t]he juxtaposition of rote-learning and corporal punishment was not unusual in early nineteenth-century Britain'; this is certainly reinforced in *Jane Eyre* through Helen's punishment and the unrelenting 'come rain or shine' approach to Sunday church-going. (Thormählen 2007:193) Evidently, religion is not intended to bestow any sense of joy or community spirit in pupils, but is instead associated with severe physical discomfort, starvation and mental and physical exhaustion despite Miss Temple's attempts to lift morale. Of the journey to church, we are told: 'we set out cold, we

arrived at church colder; during the morning service we became almost paralyzed'. (Brontë 2000: 60) The image of paralysis denotes the numbing of body and soul in this process, which is only worsened during the Sunday evening ritual which was spent 'repeating, by heart, the church catechism, and the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of St. Mathew [...]. [S]ome half dozen of little girls [...] overpowered with sleep, would fall down [...] and be taken up half dead'. (60-1) Religion is inflicted in the same unnatural way as starvation and fatigue, leading to sensory deprivation and ultimately loss of consciousness in some. Clearly, this numbness is not conducive to concentration or a positive learning environment, but it does adhere to Brocklehurst's decree that one must 'punish [a girl's] body to save her soul'. (66) Conveniently, any act of violence or neglect can be legitimised under this guise and therefore, his actions are allowed to remain unchecked until a typhus epidemic wipes out a significant number of pupils, as was the case in Brontë's own experience at Cowan Bridge.

1.2 Emma Bovary and the French Convent

Emma Bovary's experience of the conditions imposed by a Catholic order in a French convent bears little resemblance to Jane's puritanical account of those in the English boarding school, despite their being intended for similar purposes. According to the abbé Reneault in 1919, convents 'formeront les moeurs des filles à la bienséance et honnêteté comme des plus sages et vertueuses chrétiennes qui vivent honorablement dans le siècle, se gardant d'y rien entremêler de ce qui est propre à la vie religieuse ni pour la conversation ni pour les actions'. (*cited in* Mayeur 1979: 19) As morality was inseparable from the concept of femininity, it was expected that convents would take precautions to guard against the corruption or contamination of *les moeurs* during their formation. The assumption

that the cloister provides protection and control, however, is undermined by Flaubert, who demonstrates that sheltering girls from outside influence can have the inverse effect: the convent's attempts to limit Emma's sphere of action and instil Catholic values within her in fact stimulate her proclivity for hedonism. Brontë's cloistered portrayal of Lowood has similarly damaging effects; the oppressive climate created by Brocklehurst, combined with isolation which prevents outside intervention, breeds disease and death in the ranks, which eventually calls for an overhaul of the whole system.

Flaubert does not provide the reader with vast information regarding the teaching Emma receives at the convent, but it can be inferred that the methods adopted were similar to those used at Lowood: '[elle] comprenait bien le catéchisme, et c'est elle qui répondait toujours à M. le vicaire dans les questions difficiles'. (Flaubert 2001: 85) While Jane's religious instruction is Protestant and Emma's, Catholic, it is remarkable that both are taught respective principles by means of the catechism foremost, which is in itself an instructive method based on a question and answer system. For Jane, the catechism is part of the dreadful Sunday ritual which is associated with long, arduous readings of scriptures and unbearable physical discomfort. She does not resist rote-learning as a technique in an academic context, but it is clear that her memories associated with the catechism are far from joyful. Emma, on the other hand, jumps at every opportunity to respond to the priest's questions, conveying an enthusiasm for the religious ritual which is absent from Jane's story. Flaubert does not disclose any information about other pupils in Emma's class as Brontë does, yet the fact that 'elle jouait fort peu durant les récréations' implies that Emma is singular in her tastes for a girl of thirteen, reluctant to participate in playground activities with

peers and more inclined to immerse herself in her own re-imagining of religious metaphor.

When Flaubert describes the setting of the convent, traditional Catholic images and associations are almost everywhere Emma turns, seducing all her senses almost to the point of intoxication. The effect of Catholic symbolism on her concentration prevents her from following the mass being said: her senses are captured by 'la langueur mystique qui s'exhale des parfums de l'autel, de la fraîcheur des bénitiers et du rayonnement des cierges. Au lieu de suivre la messe, elle regardait dans son livre les vignettes pieuses bordées d'azur'. (85) The sensory lexis of these lines captures something of the mysticism of Catholicism and illustrates to the reader the temptation of this type of sensual abandonment, particularly for a girl isolated both from her fellow pupils and from the exterior world. These sensual temptations are derived not from without, but from within the convent. L. Czyba argues that this sensual environment moulds Emma's imagination to the extent that reality can never live up to the expectations it creates for her: 'le couvent détermine la sensualité, le tempérament voluptueux d'Emma, car il impressionne durablement ses sens'. (Czyba 1983: 62) The convent influences Emma's temperament in such a way that disillusion becomes integral to the formation of her mind, thwarting the course of her *Bildung*. The only faculties cultivated by this type of education are sensual, superficial and transient according to Czyba, including 'les sensations tactiles', 'visuelles' and 'celles de l'odorat', posing a stark contrast to the sterile atmosphere of Lowood. (62) Czyba concludes that Emma's subsequent behaviour is, at least in part, born of this early failure to correctly train *les mœurs*, which supports the argument that Emma's convent neither produces the intended moral integrity, nor serves her development: '[l]es réactions ultérieures d'Emma [...] sont la conséquence de

cette éducation première et non le fruit du hasard'. (62) There is no evidence of such sensual stimulation in Brontë's account of Jane's Protestant schooling; the austerity of her experience at Lowood in fact deprives the senses posing a stark contrast to the over-stimulation to which Emma is subject. Although Emma perceives her intoxication in a positive light as a means of alleviating the boredom and isolation she might otherwise feel, the 'langueur mystique' and the 'parfums de l'autel', Flaubert suggests, prepare the ground for Emma's being led astray in adult life.

External influences are not prevented completely, however; despite the convent's attempts to control the environment, the confines of the cloister do not prove as impermeable as intended. The washer woman functions as a source of infiltration: she bridges the gap between the convent girls and the outside world, bringing with her precisely the influences which might derail *les mœurs*. Her demeanour is harmless as she goes about tasks befitting for a woman, yet she wields surreptitious power. '[L]es pensionnaires s'échappaient de l'étude pour l'aller voir', indicates that a relationship with this woman is at once desirable and defiant: 'Elle contait des histoires, vous apprenait des nouvelles, faisait en ville vos commissions, et prêtait aux grandes, en cachette, quelque roman qu'elle avait toujours dans les poches de son tablier'. (86-7) The fact that she smuggles romance novels 'en cachette' demonstrates that this act of defiance is mutual — both parties are aware that this behaviour is reprehensible in the eyes of the establishment. Given the washer woman's penchant for 'amours, amants, amantes', it is evident that enjoyment, as opposed to instruction, constitutes the purpose behind her reading. It follows that she might apply the same attitude to recounting 'nouvelles', distorting reality for the purposes of the audience's pleasure, thereby confusing the girls' concept of truth, authenticity and reasonable

expectations of the outside world. It is through this infiltration that Emma is able to satisfy her personal literary appetite for romance and chivalry, gorging on images which sustain the disillusion instilled in her by the convent.

Barbara Vinken argues that pharmacy (in this case, the arsenic that Emma takes at the end of the novel), religion and literature are linked: they mete out 'death rather than salvation [...] not as the sugared pill, but — in a dizzying, irresistible spiral — as an addictive poison. All three are in this way the reverse of the saving spiritual meal, which stills hunger, which does not poison, but nourishes'. (Vinken 2007: 764-5) If this is applied to Emma's life, it gives weight to the argument that Emma's poisoning begins long before she embarks on it as a conscious decision. The 'tiède atmosphère' of the convent, isolated from the outside world and exempt from external inspection or moderation, creates the heavy and stale air that impacts upon Emma's judgement, forming behaviours, habits and expectations that she will take with her as a form of sickness into adult life.

Brontë uses a similar, but more physical image of sickness in her portrayal of Lowood. The meals received by pupils are far removed from the nourishing spiritual meal described by Vinken, and the general isolation of the facility, combined with the poor living conditions and neglect on Mr Brocklehurst's behalf, all contribute to the pestilent atmosphere. When Jane first ventures into the grounds of the school, she describes the vicinity as an 'enclosure, surrounded with walls so high as to exclude every glimpse of prospect'. (Brontë 2000: 48) '[B]osomed in hill and wood', it is already naturally secluded and therefore hardly requires Brocklehurst's outer wall. (76) Not only does this wall bar visual and physical access to the outside world, but it blocks the outside world from observing the negligence prevalent in the interior. Nevertheless, with the coming of spring

and brighter days, Jane derives great enjoyment from glimpsing that which lies beyond the confines of the enclosure: 'I discovered [...] that a great pleasure, an enjoyment which the horizon only bounded, lay all outside the high and spike-guarded walls of our garden'. (75) Whereas Emma is stimulated by the accoutrements within the convent, Jane glimpses a similar experience by looking beyond her immediate environs; the horizon indicates the existence of freedom and opportunity outside the walls, encouraging Jane that times, like the seasons, will change. She is comforted that there is more to life than Lowood and her ambition grows accordingly.

The poor standards of living in overcrowded dormitories provide the correct conditions for disease to thrive on the vulnerable. The dankness of the interior, which 'transformed the seminary into an hospital', can be related to the austerity and claustrophobia associated with Mr Brocklehurst's tyranny. (76) Once his authority is challenged, the physical limits of the enclosure can be broken and liberation begins to feel like a tangible possibility, albeit 'useless for most of the inmates of Lowood', considering that 'forty-five per out of the eighty girls lay ill at one time'. (77, 76) Newfound liberation is a privilege which those in good health take full advantage of, 'rambl[ing] in the woods, like gypsies, from morning till night'. (77) In metaphorical terms, the transcendence of the boundary between the interior of Lowood (and its associated regime) and exterior civilisation is ultimately what leads to its restoration and improvement; once public attention is drawn to Brocklehurst's corruption and negligence, external action is taken to restructure and improve the school to the extent that it becomes 'a truly noble institution' where Jane can access 'an excellent education'. (83) Of course, this transformation is not without its casualties, Helen Burns included, as during the epidemic, 'death was a frequent visitor'. (77) For the modern reader, this

anticipates the struggle of the suffragette movement and other women's liberation groups in their quest for equality. Danger and death played a key role in the fight to place women's issues on the public stage so that they might be considered serious political concerns. Through acts such as Emily Wilding Davidson's jump at the Epsom Derby in 1913 politicians were forced to concede that women's social position was a problem that could no longer be ignored.

In the case of Lowood, the transcending of physical barriers is positive in two ways. Firstly, it shows Jane that life has more to offer her than her enclosure dictates; if she can transcend one barrier, then she can transcend others, rendering aspiration worthwhile. Secondly, breaking the physical enclosure is the means by which light can be shed on the internal situation and change can be effected through external investigations and money from public beneficiaries. In contrast, the breaking of barriers in Emma's convent is portrayed as infiltration rather than liberation. As the washer woman penetrates the self-contained unit, which is already unwittingly poisoning the mind of young Emma from within, the external knowledge that she brings from without in the form of books, stories and 'nouvelles' suggests to Emma that her romantic fantasies are achievable in the external world. The sensual and exciting images she derives from this privately sourced reading material are reinforced by the convent atmosphere which leads her to a deepened appreciation of the superficial. Her formal education produces dependence through its expectation that pupils will either marry or become nuns and fails to train their abilities for any other outcome. In this regard, Emma's convent can be compared to Athénaïs's pensionnat in *Valentine*, as it has the effect of strengthening bourgeois values and aspirations, but offers no means of achieving them independently.

1.3 Sue Bridehead and the Teacher Training College

To turn to the other texts under consideration, neither Thomas Hardy nor George Sand divulge much information about the establishments in which Sue Bridehead or Valentine de Raimbault were educated in their early years, but the educational spaces they inhabit later in life are of interest to this discussion. Of Sue's education, we are told that in her youth she attended the village school; was, like Jude, 'crazy for books'; cohabited platonically with a Christminster student; and then passes an exam for a Queens' Scholarship to study at a Teacher Training College in Melchester. (Hardy 2016: 13) Hardy presents Sue as precisely the type of candidate that Buss and Beale aimed to accommodate when opening their colleges in the 1850s. Prior to this stage in her academic and professional career, she has also had two years' teaching experience and goes on to develop these skills as Richard Phillotson's apprentice. One of the first images of Sue that Hardy offers illustrates her inclination to subvert the status quo. On her day off from her post as an art designer in Christminster, we are told that she 'took a walk into the country with a book in her hand', something the likes of Jane Eyre could only have dreamed of in her early days at Lowood. (78) She enters the narrative independently with open prospects and access to a broad horizon; with no physical enclosures in sight, she is at liberty to leave the confines of Christminster society as she chooses. The pagan statues she purchases on her introduction to the novel immediately underline her willingness to transgress socially imposed limits, indicating that the instruction she has hitherto received has been of a more 'liberal' nature.

As children, Jane and Emma find ways of breaching the limits of their schools, allowing them access to greater freedoms than their institutions permit. Sue, on the other hand, sacrifices her liberation to embark on professional training

in adulthood; perhaps unwittingly, she narrows her immediate prospects in the hope of broadening the scope of her future opportunities. Her reaction to her new environment implies that she is unaccustomed to such control. Hardy's description of the façade of the Training College reflects its rules being 'strict to a degree': the 'mullioned and transomed windows, and a courtyard in front shut in from the road by a wall', portray the college as a unit isolated from society, cloistered and prison-like like Lowood. (108-109) Jude's impression of her is a muted version of the free spirit he had first met in Christminster:

she wore a murrey-coloured gown with a little lace collar. It was made quite plain [...]. Her hair, which formerly she had worn according to the custom of the day, was now twisted up tightly, and she had altogether the air of a woman clipped and pruned by severe discipline. (109)

Physical deprivation governs the Training College routine, highlighting another parallel that can be drawn with Lowood. Students must endure 'short allowances', rendering even a woman of Sue's small stature 'dreadfully hungry'. (110) Privation is a defining feature of this education, indicating that learning habits of self-denial is intrinsic to the formation of *les moeurs* of womanhood. The transition Sue undergoes highlights the way in which the rules of the Training College aim to control all aspects of a young woman's life, suppressing individuality of dress and limiting nourishment whilst keeping independent activities to a minimum in order to create the genre of woman who might be suitable to educate others in a similarly modest and conservative way. Although Valentine and Emma appear to avoid such harsh repression in their experiences of their schooling, Hardy makes an explicit comparison to the convent model to evoke the strict sense of discipline and

control that governs the regime of the Training College: 'her emergence in a nunlike simplicity of costume [...] was rather enforced than desired'. (113) Hardy's juxtaposition of enforcement and desire illustrates that Sue must displace her sense of self to advance in this establishment; she knows that she is capable of becoming 'independent' and 'pass[ing] pretty high', but there is no evidence to suggest that the Training College designs its regime with the satisfaction or fulfilment of the individual in mind. (110) Irrespective of academic achievement, the imposition of modest nutrition, appearance and behaviour inhibits the development of *Bildung*, training students to become deferent and obedient citizens.

At this stage in her development, however, Sue is only willing to sacrifice a certain amount. Having been pent up in the college, she 'was inclined for any adventure that would intensify the sense of her day's freedom', and consequently defies the rules by staying out all night with Jude. (114) Her actions are met with horror from the establishment, as it is assumed that her motives are of a sexually illicit nature which might bring the college into disrepute. The punishment for Sue as an adult woman bears close resemblance to that which Jane suffers at the hands of Brocklehurst: on the Principal's orders she is thrown into detention and 'nobody was to speak to [her] without permission'. (117) In contrast to Jane's peers, however, Sue's protest this punishment, refusing to work until it be revoked. Unaware of the support she has incited, Sue's instincts drive her towards freedom; it is soon discovered that she 'had got out of the back window of the room in which she had been confined, escaped in the dark across the lawn and disappeared', traversing the river to do so. (118) Ironically, in exercising strict discipline over these women, the Training College encourages rebellion rather than conformity, demonstrating the futility of such an approach.

Kathleen Blake interprets the Training College as offering 'temporary immunity from sexual disaster. Enforced from without, it is, with all of its repressiveness, yet a haven to be missed later'. (Blake 1978: 707) Though there is some truth to this, it is important to highlight that this 'protection' is a by-product of the surveillance exercised by the college. Hardy emphasises the resurgence of Sue's sexual allure following her escape by drawing the reader's attention to 'her thin pink lips' and her ensuing vulnerability which she articulates to Jude: "it is odd that you should see me like this and all my things hanging there? Yet what nonsense! They are only a woman's clothes - sexless cloth and linen..." (Hardy 2016: 119-20) Her hesitation suggests that she is caught between liberation and convention; she is aware that her sexual appeal constitutes one of the perils of womanhood as it has the potential to jeopardise her respectability, but equally resents that this social assumption encroaches on her personal action and expression. Despite her inclination towards independence, her uncertainty reveals the need for guidance to help her navigate these obstacles in changing modern times. The Training College fails to fulfil the requirements of the individual, however. Her request for readmission is refused, seemingly on the basis that her presence among the ranks would bring disgrace upon the institution. Instead of allowing her the opportunity to explain and reapply herself to her studies, the college disowns her with the parting advice that she "ought to marry [Jude] as soon as possible, for the sake of [her] reputation". (130) Within such an education system, there is no tolerance for the erring woman; it is as if breaching the physical boundary of the river taints her irreparably, anticipating the consequences of her later divorce from Phillotson. The advice is not constructive, but dismissive, which underlines the argument that the college is not a benevolent institution, nor indeed a 'haven'. Its utilitarian regime aims to instil 'good' morals in young women,

and thus replicate the ideal of womanhood by curtailing their freedoms, but its concern for the individual student extends only as far as its reputation; ultimately, the Training College is indifferent to what becomes of Sue as long as it is not associated with her indiscretions. While on one hand, advancements had been made in England in the field of women's education by 1895 when *Jude the Obscure* was published, on the other, Hardy suggests that the main agenda behind such education was not female empowerment, but a means to control women.

1.4 Valentine, the French Convent and the Pavilion

In contrast to the other novelists, George Sand does not describe Valentine's formal education at the convent in detail, but nevertheless enters into debate about the quality of the education available for young women in France at the beginning of the nineteenth century. In Valentine's first conversation with Bénédict, they speak at length on the subject of Valentine's education and accomplishments, mostly through short conversational exchanges. Valentine's exposition of the substandard and piecemeal education available to women, however, takes the form of a monologue; it is the longest continuous speech given by any character in the novel, which attests to its significance. Sand uses Valentine's account to typify the education provision for women in France at the time, thus elevating her experience to the level of national importance:

L'Éducation que nous recevons est misérable; on nous donne les éléments de tout, et l'on ne nous permet pas de rien approfondir. On veut que nous soyons instruites; mais du jour où nous deviendrons savantes, nous serions ridicules. [...] Nous qui savons imparfaitement l'anglais, le dessin et la

musique; [...] car sur vingt d'entre nous, il n'en est souvent pas une qui possède à fond une connaissance quelconque. (13)

This education is reminiscent of Rousseau's philosophy that women should be trained 'pour plaire et pour être subjuguée'. (2009: 517) It is clearly not designed to benefit women themselves, but to render them appealing prospects on the upper-class marriage market, coercing them into their condoned roles as dependants by constructing artificial limitations. Sand creates the impression of interrupted *Bildung*, from which it can be inferred that women such as Valentine are capable of far more than their education permits. Valentine's frustration at having acquired only an imperfect knowledge indicates an awareness of her unfulfilled potential and the social consequences of attempts to deepen an education that she deems 'misérable'. Her response to the systemic limiting of women can be likened to the students' reaction to Sue's punishment at the Training College. She does not comply quietly, but rather rails against the injustice of the regime, demonstrating once again that the system has failed to achieve its objectives.

A parallel can be drawn here between the author and her protagonist. Sand attended the couvent des Augustines Anglaises in Paris from 1818 for a period of three years, from which it can be assumed she drew inspiration for *Valentine*. During her time at the convent, it appears that she had a similarly poor experience of the curriculum, despite its offering her a period of respite from life with her grandmother. (see Sand 2004: 356, 426) According to her autobiography, the girls were 'assez convenablement nourries', unlike in the representations of boarding schools in the English novels, but her grandmother sent her primarily to benefit from the '*maîtres d'agrément*' as opposed to the academic regime. (Sand 2004: 366, 355) Seemingly, her grandmother's intention was to tame her rather than

liberate her, deeming her to have 'point de tenue, point de grâce, point d'à-propos'. (2004: 355) Georges Lubin elaborates further on the lamentable curriculum for a person of Sand's potential: 'on peut le regretter pour elle, car elle n'y a pas appris grand chose, si ce n'est la langue anglaise et de bonnes notions d'italien'. (456) Even in cases where a formal education was available to girls, sating academic curiosity did not feature highly on the agenda. Lubin also notes that this incompleteness of training was not particular to Sand, nor the couvent des Augustines Anglaises, but a national problem for women, rooted in poor management and a lack of qualified and competent teachers:

il n'y avait sans doute pas d'établissement bien meilleur, tant de l'éducation des filles était négligée, laissée à l'arbitraire des supérieures, elles-mêmes trouvant difficilement des professeurs valables puisqu'il n'y avait pas de diplômes qui pussent servir de critères de connaissances. (456)

Despite not having had an altogether unpleasant experience at her convent, Sand appears to develop a critical attitude towards the education provision for women in her adulthood, which gives further weight to the notion that the opinions she ascribes to Valentine could be of personal significance: 'Les femmes reçoivent une déplorable éducation; et c'est là le grand crime des hommes envers elles. Ils ont porté l'abus partout, accaparant les avantages des institutions les plus sacrées'. (Sand 2009: 137) This suggests that Sand sees the poverty of the educational curriculum available to girls as being an instrument of the tyranny of men over women, an idea that is implied but not specifically stated in her construction of Valentine's speech.

Sand and Valentine's experiences of the convent can also be compared in so far as the education they received was a specific provision for 'privileged girls of good families'. (Jack 2001: 69) One effect of this organisation was that girls rarely made acquaintance with those outside of their social rank. The attention paid to class reflects another aspect of utilitarian regimes and constitutes a further obstacle to the organic development of *Bildung*. While the education received by Valentine and Sand is intended to equip them to become representatives of their classes, Sand's description of Athénaïs's experience reflects the aspiration underpinning the education of girls belonging to the agricultural bourgeoisie. According to the fashion of the time, agricultural families in possession of new wealth, like the Lhérys and, indeed, the Bovarys, would send their children away to school as a mark of their financial success. Athénaïs gains her 'education' in a pensionnat in Orléans where she picks up superficial habits and learns almost nothing of intellectual substance, but rather consolidates a habit in emulation of the fashions and mannerisms of the upper classes: 'Athénaïs, comme une cire molle et flexible, avait pris dans un pensionnat d'Orléans tous les défauts des jeune provinciales: la vanité, l'ambition, l'envie, la petitesse'. (Sand 1856: 5) Instead of educating girls to elevate their social status through knowledge and enhanced ability, they are taught to mimic the flaws and extravagances of the upper classes in order that they might resemble them through superficiality. The impression conveyed is that these women are not only enslaved by their gender, but by their status and the requirement that they be admired and defined on both counts. Such a system with its tendency to homogenise female potential and ambition was essentially conservative; it could only reinforce social hierarchies and the prejudices that sustained them.

The pavilion that Valentine cultivates in the grounds of her estate challenges the utilitarian education provided by her convent and Athénaïs's pensionnat and draws upon Rousseau's philosophy of early years education. Contrary to his argument that it is proper for women to be always 'assujetties ou à un homme, ou aux jugements des hommes', he appeals to mothers, as protectors of men, to guard them from the prejudices and judgements that women are to be governed by: 'Les préjugés, l'autorité, la nécessité, l'exemple, toutes les institutions sociales, dans lesquelles nous nous trouvons submergés, étoufferaient en lui la nature, et ne mettraient rien à la place'. (Rousseau 2009: 534, 45) He likens the young (male) child to 'un arbrisseau que le hasard fait naître au milieu d'un chemin, et que les passants font bientôt périr, en le heurtant de toutes parts et le pliant dans tous les sens', but whereas women are expected to bend and mould themselves to satisfy the expectations of social institutions and public opinion with the intention always to please, Rousseau urges them to nurture the unique spirit of their progeny. (45) Sand's grandmother in particular was influenced by Rousseau's teachings and it is this attitude that Sand appears to draw upon for Valentine's management of the pavilion. (see Jack 2001: 53, 65 and Sand 2004: 81, 131) In the first instance, Valentine's intention is self-study, but she later adapts the pavilion for the purposes of her nephew's education. In order to shelter him from the contaminating influences of society, represented by her mother, grandmother and Lansac, she follows Rousseau's teachings almost word for word, seemingly in an attempt to 'écarter de la grande route, et garantir l'arbrisseau naissant du choc des opinions humaines'. (Rousseau 2009: 45-6) He advises: 'Cultive, arrose le jeune plante avant qu'elle meure [...]. Forme de bonne heure une enceinte autour de l'âme de ton enfant [...] toi seule y dois poser la barrière'. (46) The pavilion

already offers natural protection which Valentine reinforces in line with Rousseau's principles:

Valentine fit entourer d'une clôture la partie du parc où était situé le pavillon. [...] On y ajouta sur les confins, [...] des remparts de vigne vierge [...] et de ces haies de jeunes cyprès qu'on taille en rideau, et qui forment une barrière impénétrable à la vue. (Sand 1856: 63)

The pavilion is secluded like Lowood and Emma's convent, but in this case, the effect of its isolation is liberating rather than punitive or controlling.

As Aimée Boutin argues, 'the pavilion figures a space for [...] Valentine to put into practice her ideas about education' which oppose the instruction she has received herself. (Boutin 2005: 322) These ideas extend beyond Valentin to the other occupants of the pavilion, allowing them to strengthen social bonds and throw off the prejudices of rank. The concept of a 'classless' education can, again, be attributed to Rousseau's idea that it is futile and damaging to the individual to train him for one station when the course of modern life is so turbulent: 'peut-on concevoir une méthode plus insensée que d'élever un enfant comme n'ayant jamais à sortir de sa chambre [...]? [...] [S]'il descend d'un seul degré, il est perdu'. (Rousseau 2009: 53) Valentine's objection that 'on nous élève toujours pour être riches; jamais pour être pauvres' refers exactly to the type of education that trains women for one eventuality only and does not account for any change in fortune. (Sand 1856: 13) An aristocratic education becomes quickly irrelevant to Louise, for example, whose banishment forces her into sudden independence overshadowed by the threat of destitution.

The environment that the pavilion facilitates not only provides an opportunity for education to take place irrespective of class, but offers an antidote to the homogenous social environment experienced by Valentine and Athénaïs in their formal education establishments: it is, according to Debra L. Terzian, 'a space in which social difference is collapsed and where an aristocratic heroine can coexist happily with those from a lower social class [...] and those that society has expelled'. (1997: 277) By removing the limitations of rank, the members of the pavilion are free to interact and develop as individuals, each benefitting from the capacities of the others. This notion of diversity evokes one of the main precepts underpinning Humboldt's vision of a 'liberal' education system from which a communal spirit can ensue. He praises the practice of 'mutual co-operation' to produce the most satisfying and fruitful results for both the individual and the community: 'It is through such social union, [...] as is based on the internal wants and capacities of its members, that each is enabled to participate in the rich collective resources of all the others'. (1854:12) Despite the complications posed by the romantic friction between Valentine, Louise and Bénédict which will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter Four, Sand demonstrates the promise of such a system in the development and contentment of the individual, creating the overall impression of its being a preferable alternative to the formal models she references. It can be concluded, therefore, that there are significant educational advantages to be gained from the absence of a prescribed system of learning. The responsive self learns not only from its relationship with others; it can also explore its own lines of enquiry.

Chapter Two: Self-Education

In Jude Fawley, Thomas Hardy created an example par excellence of the nineteenth-century autodidact, a portrait in which he demonstrates the qualities of intellectual curiosity and social ambition, together with the hurdles erected by established society against such forces. 'Self-education', or 'l'autodidactisme', in its simplest form can be defined as education undertaken 'largely through one's own efforts, rather than by formal instruction', or the act of instructing oneself solitarily, 'sans maître'. (Stevenson 2010: 1615, Rey-Debove and Rey 2002: 184) These concepts will be explored in this chapter through examination of the reading that the protagonists pursue independently of any formal guidance.

The terms 'self-education' or 'self-improvement' indicate the individual's efforts to advance personally, but they also imply that this advancement will result in some sort of social benefit. The term 'self-cultivation' exemplifies this connection, as it more explicitly bridges the gap between the individual 'self' and the wider 'culture'. Even in its agricultural usage, 'cultivation' refers to the concept of growth and maturation, which can also be applied to the development of the individual. In the Chambers Dictionary, 'culture' is described as 'cultivation [...] refinement in manners, thought, taste [...] a type of civilisation; the attitudes and values which inform a society'. (366) A similar definition is also given in Le Petit Robert: '[d]éveloppement de certaines facultés de l'esprit par des exercices intellectuels appropriés. [...] Ensemble des connaissances acquises qui permettent de développer le sens critique, le goût, le jugement'. (611) This considered, the solitary practice of reading with a view to developing one's critical faculties, taste, judgement and manners is a means by which one's social potential can be advanced, as these skills are products and expectations of the society that

one inhabits. Self-education (or self-cultivation) therefore naturally relates to the cohesion of the individual with society, which is an integral aspect of the *Bildungsroman* genre.

Having recognised the connection between the intellectual efforts on the behalf of the individual and the wider social connotations thereof, the potentially problematic nature of study 'sans maître' becomes more evident. 'The right to keep other people out is the very foundation of masculine self-government', writes Nancy Armstrong in her discussion of gender and sexuality in the Victorian novel. (2012: 176) This right, however, was valid not only in governance of the male self, but extended to social government which included the right to insist on repression of the female self. As women were denied access to the public sphere and were expected to conduct themselves in a selfless manner at home in the sole interest of husband and hearth, from a nineteenth-century point of view, it is not difficult to see how the assertion or development of the female self through the autonomous and independent act of private reading might have inspired fear and suspicion in the male, and therefore cultural, imagination.

According to O. D. Munn, S. H. Wales and A. E. Beach in their 1863 article on 'Self-Education', reading, if done correctly, can constitute 'study in its highest sense'. (313) Conversely, if not conducted in a serious manner, it can muddle the senses, 'placing a variety of images before the mind in rapid succession, like a kaleidoscope, [...] each is forgotten as a new one is presented; and after all is done nothing remains but a dim recollection of a jumble of colors'. (313) Other than halting intellectual development, another contemporary argument, particularly in relation to novel-reading, was that independent reading could corrupt or damage the mind or character of the person in question. J. P. Dodd LL.D, a professor of Law who spoke at the Mechanics' Institution in South Shields in around 1850 on

the subject of self-education, wrote with regard to novels that they can only 'paint virtue in bright colours and vice in dark ones, and thus by the contrast make us love the one and hate the other', raising the question as to whether 'more harm than good may be done by bringing vice prominently before the minds of young persons', particularly those who are reading without the guidance of a tutor or mentor. (1856: 22) The perceived dangers of independent reading will be seen most clearly through analysis of Emma Bovary who, as many critics would argue, conforms to Dodd's view that indiscriminate novel reading has 'the same effect on the mind as ardent spirits when taken to excess, and dissipated habits have upon the constitution'. (1856: 22-23) Equally, in the case of Sue Bridehead, it appears that reading liberal-minded authors such as J.S. Mill lulls her into the sense that she can and should retain the free will and individuality that she eventually relinquishes, along with her controversial love for Jude, following the deaths of her children.

In nineteenth-century France, the activity of reading was politically charged on several levels and became more of a political concern in correlation with the increased production of books as a result of advances made in the course of the Industrial Revolution and the rise in the population's literacy. This era is what Martyn Lyons calls 'l'Âge du Papier', the success of which hinging on 'le développement de l'alphabétisation, le déclin des patois et la croissance de l'éducation primaire'. (1987: 14) From an industrial point of view, the book as 'objet de consommation quotidien' was, in theory, beneficial to contemporary society, at least in economical terms, as 'les progrès techniques de l'imprimerie et l'apparition d'un nouvel esprit d'entreprise ouvraient la voie à une exploitation capitaliste d'une clientèle de lecteurs en augmentation'. (1987: 14) Consumption and production of books was a mark of industrial success, but it also meant that reading material

was more widely available to a greater number of people, rendering its consumption less easily controlled. Oral tradition accordingly became a less common practice and reading as an individual pleasure a more common, and therefore a more politically suspicious one, particularly in the case of women. According to Lyons's study, the number of titles produced in France rose from under 3500 in 1815 to over 13000 by the mid 1850s around the time that *Madame Bovary* was published. (1987: 13) This illustrates the extent of the growth over a relatively short amount of time, bearing in mind that the level of production dropped around the revolutionary years of 1830 and 1848. Widespread literacy was a new social and political phenomenon surrounding which was a culture of suspicion and fear as it granted a new source of independence and therefore, 'new sources of inspiration and self-discovery', which could lead to further social discontent. (Allen 1991: 6) Prioritisation of the self was at a discord with the political model for women based on devotion to *Kinder, Küche, Kirche* and preoccupations about modes and content of reading subsequently surged. During and after the Bourbon Restoration, there were Catholic campaigns against so-called 'mauvais livres' which often involved book burnings, particularly in the years 1817-1830. (see Lyons 2001: 12) According to certain Catholic figures (Lyons cites the abbé Bethléem as an example), the 'good reader was one who read works officially endorsed by the Church', but many modern novels by authors such as Sand, Zola and Balzac (notably the type of novels that Emma Bovary habitually reads along with an abundance of romance literature) did not make the cut for reasons of obscenity or dubious morality. (2001: 15, 13-14)

The concept of self-education or 'self-help' took hold in England over the middle decades of the nineteenth century and is exemplified in the publication of Samuel Smiles's *Self-Help* (1859) and *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household*

Management (1861). Smiles advocates self-improvement as 'a marked feature in the English character' which is more beneficial to the individual of the working and lower-middle classes than help provided by the state: 'Help from without is often enfeebling in its effects, but help from within invariably invigorates'. (2002: 20, 17) In *Self-Help*, he provides numerous 'instances of men [...] who by dint of persevering application and energy, have raised themselves from the humblest ranks of industry to eminent positions of usefulness and influence in society' to illustrate that men could improve their lot and support their nation without state intervention. (2002: 28) As Peter W. Sinnema notes in his introduction to *Self-Help*, however, for Smiles, '[a]long with perseverance, manliness is a paramount virtue' and 'women barely register in this world of male heroes'. (2002: xxii, xxi) Smiles's approach, on one hand, undermines social hierarchies by instilling aspiration in men whom have not been granted the same fortune and opportunities as the upper-classes and law-makers, yet on the other, reinforces patriarchal structures in his exclusion of women from participation in a movement that he considers characteristic of English culture.

Mrs Beeton's Book, which Sinnema considers 'a companion-piece to that of Smiles' for a female audience, as its title suggests, comprises informative and practical guidance for women on the smooth and effective management of the household. (2002: xxiv) While it assumes female competence in using an array of household utensils and tools, providing detailed advice on subjects such as buying and carving meat and the concoction and administration of home remedies to treat illnesses, it is designed to aid women to make the best of their lot rather than to help them exceed it. It places importance on adherence to social etiquette and, though it acknowledges that women are expected to fulfil many functions within the household, it is anchored on the belief that men and women have specific

social responsibilities: 'Men are now so well served out of doors - at clubs, hotels and restaurants - that, to compete with the attractions of these places, a mistress must be thoroughly acquainted with the theory and practice of cookery, as well as the art of making a comfortable home'. (1906: 1) It is implied that women are responsible for the running of the home and keeping their husband's interest by competing with the allure of the public sphere. Their efforts in 'self-improvement' are not for any personal gain or social advantage, other than that of outward appearance, but to ensure the comfort and respectability of others.

Although Mrs Beeton suggests that wives should leave time in their schedules for 'reading and harmless recreation', this was not a call for them to embark on the demanding independent study that Jane and Sue undertake, which is evidently not in the interest of maintaining domestic bliss. (1906: 18) Brontë and Hardy root their characters firmly within the culture of self-improvement exemplified by Smiles, but their reading and purposes are much more academic and personally beneficial than the endeavours for home improvement that Mrs Beeton advises for women. Their reading equips them with knowledge, skills and argument to bypass the limits imposed on them by formal provision of education, endowing them with the potential to escape the shackles of dependence. Social ascension is not the main motive behind their reading, however; it is presented as a vehicle through which they can satisfy their own intellectual curiosity and is therefore instrumental in their self-exploration. As an intellectual pursuit, reading in these novels challenges the prescribed sphere for women, projecting the idea that women in general are capable of much more intellectually demanding roles than society acknowledges.

From her youth, Jane reads history and adventure texts for recreational purposes to distract her from her isolation, which results in a heightening of her

understanding of her place and power in the world. For Jane, reading is a means by which she begins to understand her position and hone her critical skills in identifying and countering untruths and obstacles which arise over the course of her formative years. Similarly, Sue's more mature imagination is captured by philosophical texts and poems which allow her to gather evidence to support and defend her ideas about the freedoms to which she feels entitled. She reads critically in order to gather evidence to support her convictions so that she might be able to navigate society as a woman free from the bind of imposed convention, envisaging a world in which relationships reject traditional models.

With regards to the French texts, we can only make assumptions about the kind of reading Valentine may have undertaken as Sand does not mention any specific texts despite Valentine's anger at the inadequacy of women's education in France at the time. Emma Bovary, on the other hand, immerses herself in novels in an attempt to blur the reality of her dull domestic existence, but her motives are significantly less academic and more hedonistic than those of Jane and Sue. She reads as a means to escape the mediocrity of the 'moeurs de province', amalgamating images in her mind which liberate her temporarily, but which cannot be reconciled with the reality of her situation. In the first instance, at least in her own mind, her texts broaden her trajectory and allow her to play roles which would otherwise be inaccessible; it is Emma's inability to reflect and analyse the images the texts present which results in over-saturation, disillusionment and, ultimately, the debt which pushes her to commit suicide at the end of the novel. While intellectual exploration is not the purpose of her activity, Flaubert's description of her response to the opera in Rouen demonstrates an understanding of culture which she would have been unable to experience had it not been for her adolescent taste for the novels of Walter Scott.

For all three heroines, reading has socio-political implications as it is used as a mechanism to escape the confines of one's immediate surroundings; it is a means of asserting, exploring or developing the self, however temporarily, in an oppressive climate that demands female deference and selflessness. It is therefore an integral aspect of the novels as female *Bildungsromane* as the texts the women read shape the course of their journeys by influencing and supporting their own perceptions of themselves and the real-life events they encounter. Equally, they all bond with male characters in their respective texts through their literary interests, although, again, this is not the fundamental motivation for their reading. This theme will be examined further in Chapter Five which considers intellectual connections as the foundation of 'exalting' romantic relationships.

2.1 The Habit of Reading and its Purposes

Charlotte Brontë introduces the theme of reading in *Jane Eyre* in the very first chapters as an important and therapeutic part of Jane's existence at the Reed household. When excluded from the family environment by her Aunt, Jane seeks comfort in books in her isolation:

I soon possessed myself of a volume, taking care that it should be one stored with pictures. I mounted into the window-seat: gathering up my feet, I sat cross-legged, like a Turk; and, having drawn the red moreen curtain nearly close, I was shrined in double retirement. (2000: 7-8)

Immediately, reading is portrayed as a solitary and hidden activity which Jane uses as an antidote to her familial alienation; more importantly, it is an act which is not controlled by her Aunt, her oppressor, and so it also constitutes an act of rebellion.

This transgression is emphasised by her stance: sitting 'cross-legged, like a Turk', presents reading as a religious or spiritual experience for Jane, although not a wholly Christian practice. Her position resembles a typical meditative pose, reflecting the purposes of her reading. Interestingly, according to minister Isaac Watts in *The Improvement of the Mind* (1741), a text owned by the Brontës, freedom and meditation are factors that ensure scholars maintain their pursuit of 'truth' in the face of adversity: 'It is by meditation that we fix in our memory whatsoever we learn, and form our own judgement of the truth or falsehood, the strength or weakness, of what others speak or write'. (*cited in* Thormählen 2007: 138) This emphasises the cathartic effects of reading, but also its positive impact on the mind's powers of perception and reason, which become integral to the positive trajectory of Jane's *Bildung*.

Her position by the window offers her an exterior vista whilst the heavy curtain enshrouds her interior view, concealing her from other members of the household: 'Folds of scarlet drapery shut in my view to the right hand; to the left were clear panes of glass, protecting, but not separating me from the drear November day'. (2000: 8) Although she is physically protected from the elements, she is shut off from her interior domestic situation which emphasises her isolation. Reading in this environment can therefore be seen as a lens through which she can view the outside world, shaping her perspective for her future experiences of the world which lies beyond the Reed household. It provides an escapist outlet from the interior of the house; much like glimpsing the horizon at Lowood, the prospect she is faced with as she gazes out of the window shows her that there is more to life than she has already experienced, but that the world is not necessarily always idyllic. Reading alone, Jane is at liberty to form her own perception without outside influence other than that which the nature of her position as dependant

and outsider bestows on her. The book she selects is *Bewick's History of British Birds*, which presents her with descriptions and images of places such as Iceland and Greenland which, for her, exist only as figments of her imagination, having never travelled further than her immediate vicinity: 'Of these death-white realms I formed an idea of my own; shadowy, like all the half-comprehended notions that float dim through children's brains, but strangely impressive'. (8) The avian subject matter suggests notions of escape and anticipates the avian imagery used later by Rochester to manipulate Jane, which will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter Five.

As the narrator of *Jane Eyre* is Jane herself, who can offer criticism and analysis of the actions of her younger self from a first-person point of view, her progression is evident to the reader from the beginning of the text. She has become the author of her own story in a way which is not possible for Emma, Sue or Valentine, whose stories are presented in third-person narratives. This is one aspect which firmly establishes *Jane Eyre* as a novel of formation from the outset. Jane accepts the under-development of her childhood perception and recognises, in retrospect, that she still had much to learn. Although 'half-comprehended' at the time, in her adulthood she understands the seductive and illusory power of images, despite her enjoyment of them, in a way that Emma Bovary does not, demonstrating a development which is absent in the character of Emma. The adult Jane appreciates that the feelings these images inspired in her younger self were interpretations; she perceives and creates her own images from the presentation offered by the artist which, she accepts in her narrative voice, are not necessarily exact representations of real life. The images of the 'church-yard', 'ships becalmed on a torpid sea', the 'fiend pinning down the thief's back', and the 'black, horned thing' at the gallows could be derived from other sources as manifestations of

Gothic or Romantic stories which she has either read herself or heard from Bessie, the servant, who dabbles in story-telling. These haunting Gothic images foreshadow the perceived supernatural happenings which occur during her stay with Rochester at Thornfield, but as they are penned by Jane herself, they also reflect the power of story-telling and literary skill that she accrues over time; as a child, images have power over her, but the existence of her autobiography shows that she achieves mastery over the image, requiring that it captivate the reader of *Jane Eyre* as it once did her.

While Jane reads alone as a source of comfort in exclusion, Emma Bovary and Sue Bridehead use reading to isolate themselves as a form of respite in their unhappy marriages. Emma's desire for escape spans the entirety of *Madame Bovary*, along with her custom to replicate and confuse fiction in reality. In the final part of the novel, in the midst of her long-awaited affair with Léon, her marriage to Charles becomes so unbearable that she banishes him to a separate floor so that she can achieve freedom and release from domestic banality by gorging herself on the pages of novels: 'Pour ne pas avoir la nuit auprès d'elle, cet homme étendu qui dormait, elle finit, à force de grimaces, par le reléguer au second étage; et elle lisait jusqu'au matin des livres extravagants où il y avait des tableaux orgiaques avec des situations sanglantes'. (2001: 377) This is the kind of 'private reading' that Thomas W. Laqueur discusses in relation to solitary sex, and the moral preoccupations associated with the phenomenon of 'women reading novels alone': 'Private reading [...] bore all the marks of masturbatory danger: privacy and secrecy, of course, but also the engagement of the imagination, self-absorption, and freedom from social constraint'. (2003: 320, 314) Emma rejects wifely devotion, intimacy and even proximity to Charles in favour of self-indulgence, lying 'engourdie, à peine vetue', reading exactly the type of bawdy, bloodthirsty

sensation novels which were to be avoided by any virtuous woman. (Flaubert: 2001: 377) Her lethargy and nakedness embody her rejection of all the responsibilities associated with marriage and motherhood, instead demonstrating a subversion based on hedonism and the prioritisation of the self. While this by no means constitutes the development of mental faculties, Flaubert indicates this activity as being a form of release and self-exploration which is necessary within an otherwise mundane environment.

Her approach to her affair is similarly exploratory, allowing her to assume the role of adulteress as presented by her novels. She insists upon following the conventions of this role to the letter, becoming more and more extravagant in her displays of affection and expectations of Léon, as she did with Rodolphe previously. In order to perpetuate 'cette flamme intime que l'adultère avivait', she fills her head with increasingly exciting and provocative images from adventure stories to provide her with inspiration for her liaisons with Léon as she begins to discover 'dans l'adultère toutes les platitudes du mariage'. (2001: 379) Although ultimately it is her addiction to these images that destroys the excitement, 'tarissant toute félicité à la vouloir trop grande', she continues to honour all the tropes of adultery in an attempt to continue playing the role authentically and prolong the emotion it provokes in her. (379) The letters she receives in return from both Léon and Rodolphe deceive and disappoint her, as they are unable to live up to her expectations, causing her to redouble her efforts. In spite of the reality of the dwindling passion between Emma and Léon, '[e]lle n'en continuait pas moins à lui écrire des lettres amoureuses, en vertu de cette idée, qu'une femme doit toujours écrire à son amant'. (379)

Interestingly, in *Paul et Virginie* (1788), the first novel that Flaubert mentions Emma reading in her youth, the characters learn to read and write for the sole

purpose of writing letters to each other. Given the nature of her attachment to this text, which will subsequently be discussed in greater detail, it can be inferred that the act of letter-writing holds significant sentimental value for Emma, as it is integral to the role of the estranged and longing lover in the Romance genre. Unfortunately, rather than heightening and inspiring her experience of reality, her letters stimulate her to create a vision of a lover which is neither Léon nor Rodolphe, but an amalgamation of sensational and Romantic tropes which can only exist as 'un fantôme fait de ses plus ardents souvenirs, de ses lectures les plus belles'. (2001: 379) Emma's tapestry of imagery used to invent this man is so rich and fantastical that she is unable even to retain the image in her head, 'tant il se perdait, comme un dieu, sous l'abondance de ses attributs'. (2001: 379) Where once her imagination offered her an escape from reality, this implosion of imagery, bearing no resemblance to real life, leaves her with 'une courbature incessante et universelle'. (2001: 380) Whereas Jane's skills of analysis and perception develop through reading and experience, providing her with a sense of clarity and eventually allowing her to manipulate the image to her own design, Emma remains confused and betrayed by images on account of her addiction to them, preventing her from ever being able to control them or the effect they have on her.

At the Hôtel de Boulogne after the climax of her affair with Léon has passed, Emma's over-stimulation and over-saturation trap her yet further in the mundane confines of reality, blocking her only means of escape: 'Elle aurait voulu, s'échappant comme un oiseau, aller se rajeunir quelque part, bien loin, dans les espaces immaculés'. (381) She becomes trapped in the very place she accessed with Léon to achieve freedom and release. The walls of her enclosure narrow and the power of her imagination is no longer strong enough to liberate her, thus the channels through which she achieved liberation are barred. Like Brontë, Flaubert

introduces an avian reference here to express her desire for escape; in Emma's experience, only animals can obtain real freedom over fields and across seas. Her dog, Djali, whom she names after Esmerelda's goat in Victor Hugo's *Notre Dame de Paris* (1833), makes a bid for freedom during her move to Yonville in an example that Emma can only dream of following. In this choice of name, she identifies with, or fancies herself, an Esmerelda figure who lives outside the constraints of convention as a gypsy street dancer, attractive and desirable yet still vulnerable. As Sarah Hurlburt argues, Emma's desire for escape is down to 'an almost instinctive, animal resistance to discipline', a discipline to which she must submit if she is to remain socially plausible. (2011-2012: 86) Unlike the greyhound, who can simply bolt across fields and live an untethered life away from domestication, society and masters, Emma can only daydream and read to invent what might lie beyond the horizon. For critic Sally Mitchell, a daydreaming habit allows Emma an influence over the course of events which she does not possess in real life: 'Daydreaming allows the dreamer to control the world, to invent a hero who has the qualities she would like to find in an ideal lover and to impose her desires on the physical circumstances of life'. (1981: 166) Although at first these daydreams allow her this escape, eventually the confines of her physical circumstances prove to be much narrower than the extent of her mind, meaning that the projection of her mental image can no longer function. Despite her animal tendency for flight, her womanhood dictates her trajectory, forcing her to seize the only *sortie* still available to her in death, where she realises truly that '[e]lle était libre'. (Flaubert 2001: 282)

For Sue Bridehead, freedom is an essential element of the identity she wishes to project, but her desire for escape is directed more ardently towards convention than her physical surroundings. When she marries Richard Phillotson

for the first time, she, like Emma, uses reading as an excuse to avoid contact with her husband, though for Sue this is less because of the banality of her relationship than her repulsion at the expectations of her within marriage, not least her aversion to consummating the union. When Phillotson finds that Sue is not in their bed as he expects, she uses books to excuse herself: “I am not sleepy; I am reading”. (Hardy 2016: 180) Later, he finds her in a cupboard under the stairs, opting for physical discomfort rather than the marital bed. Sue uses reading as justification for her absence which anticipates her announcement of her wish to separate from him. Hardy does not disclose the content of her reading on this occasion, but it can be inferred that it comprised J.S. Mill’s *On Liberty* (1859) by virtue of her using it in her ensuing argument with Phillotson. Sue, like Jane, is able to manipulate text at will in order to legitimise her individualist philosophy of doing “just as I choose”. (128) She speaks these words initially as a means of justifying her flight from the Training College and then repeats the sentiment to Phillotson to persuade him that her wish to separate and live with Jude is logical and reasonable. When Phillotson questions whether she wants to live with Jude as his wife, she negates the implication that she is anyone’s property, repeating “[a]s I choose”, reasserting her subjectivity and autonomy. (183)

The lines of Mill that Sue selects to aid her cause with Phillotson pose an intellectual contrast to her repeated plea of “[w]ill you let me?”: “She, or he, “who lets the world, or his own portion of it, choose his plan of life for him, has no need of any other faculty than the ape-like one of imitation””. (182, 183) This is by no means the only excerpt in Mill’s chapter on Individualism which evokes this line of argument; Sue selects it seemingly with the intention to accuse Phillotson on an intellectual level despite the fact that it is she who is technically “committing a sin”, at least in accepted moral and legal terms. (182) Effectively, Sue is implying

that if Phillotson, as an academic, refuses to acknowledge her appeal to his intellect, he is proving his mental faculties to be no more advanced or critical than those of 'ape-like imitation'. She turns her domestic plea into an intellectual battle, admitting that she has "been reading it up" in order to add gravity and proof to her views so that she can be less easily dismissed. (183) Reading Mill enables her to justify and articulate her own feelings as to how society should function and adds intellectual authority to her argument, creating the impression that Sue is truly an academic of the sort that Christminster should be proud, were it not for its entrenchment in prejudice and convention. This is not just a conversation between individuals; through his presentation of Sue, Hardy depicts the female academic weaponising contemporary debate to confront social traditions head-on, the difficulty of which is indicated by her initial hesitation.

To add a further dimension to her argument, she also quotes Mill's line from Humboldt which praises "Human development in its richest diversity", thereby introducing the wider social implications and potential benefits of the philosophy. (184) Whilst the established social order works on the assumption that control will be maintained through uniformity and conformity of the people, Mill suggests that society's failure to acknowledge the diverse nature of the individual will impede its progress: 'Where, not the person's own character, but the traditions or customs of other people are the rule of conduct, there is wanting one of the principal ingredients of human happiness, and quite the chief ingredient of individual and social progress'. (Mill 1989: 57) Whereas traditional social authority demands that the individual prove an allegiance to established institutions such as marriage and the church in order to be accepted, Mill implies that society should assume a responsibility for incorporating the diversity of the individual into the social whole such that it may develop to its full potential. If Phillotson were to deny Sue her

wishes, according to her argument as supported by Mill, he would be operating not only cruelly and selfishly on a human level, but to the detriment of social advancement on an intellectual one. What is more, Sue wins this argument on both fronts: she convinces Phillotson that he “wouldn’t be cruel to her in the name of the law”, and makes him concede to her intellectual superiority on account of the fact that he “can’t answer her arguments”. (193, 188) Sue asserts herself as an individual and an intellectual here by undermining the validity of society’s (and Phillotson’s) values. Through her reading of Mill, she finds ‘the intellectual basis for her instinctive assertion of individuality’, allowing her to win out against Phillotson and consequently gain, at least for a time, the freedom she champions. (Jacobus 1975: 312) Her reading is the honing tool of her persuasion which enables her to continue to live as she chooses.

2.2 Reading as Access to Culture

Sue’s employment of philosophy demonstrates an access to intellectual culture which was typically a male luxury. She admits that she has ‘had advantages’, having read ‘most of the Greek and Latin classics through translations’ among others: ‘I read Lemprière, Catullus, Martial, Juvenal, Lucian, Beaumont and Fletcher, Boccaccio, Scarron, De Brantôme, Sterne, De Foe, Smollett, Fielding, Shakespeare, the Bible’. (Hardy 2016: 121-2) She does not appear to read novels like *Emma*, but her inclination towards satire, political writing and works which express sexual desire underline her hostility towards the establishment. Although it could be argued that reading these texts contributes to her later downfall, Hardy’s sympathetic stance on this subject is implied by the fact that he too engages in writing which criticises convention. In *Jude the Obscure*, he encourages the reader to support the plight of the individual striving to develop and survive against larger

forces of social pressure; he presents both Jude and Sue as estimable characters who have accrued formidable knowledge against the odds, not as morally reprehensible individuals who are worthy of their punishment. By making the reader feel the injustices that Sue and Jude encounter, he evokes the same sentiments as Mill, implying that the onus should be on society to evolve for the benefit of all, rather than to simply protect the privileges of the male elite who do not necessarily possess the talent of those whom society excludes.

This idea is also expressed in *Jane Eyre* through Jane's dispute with her cousin, John, which results in Jane's sentence to the 'red-room'. John exercises his masculine right as future master of the household, making the direct demand that Jane call him 'Master', even though he is only 'a schoolboy of fourteen years old'. (Brontë 2000: 9) It can thus be argued that he has learned his male privileges from his mother; although he is said to have 'not much affection' for her, he nevertheless uses her matriarchal authority to his advantage as he knows that she will condemn Jane for any act of 'passion' towards him. (10-11) This validates his tyrannical behaviour towards Jane, reinforcing her position as dependant and his as junior patriarch and heir. Mrs Reed trains both children for their future social positions with a view to maintaining the status quo with regards to both gender and class relations. Despite not having any inclination towards books or learning himself, he lays claim to the books that bring Jane such pleasure before attacking her with one in a cruel and calculated fashion: "Now, I'll teach you to rummage through my book-shelves: for they are mine; all the house belongs to me". (11) He emphasises his 'superiority' by exercising his rights of possession, denying Jane pleasure, comfort and, more symbolically if unwittingly, access to culture. In exercising his male right to govern, he overrules Jane's attempt to self-govern,

disturbing her peace and disrupting her quest for knowledge by literally beating her with her only means of escape.

In this instance, sick of being 'bullied and punished' by John, she rejects his regime by resisting with instinctive physical self-defence. (10) The girl whose 'every morsel of flesh [...] shrank when he came near', admits that when attacked in this manner she 'did not very well know what [she] did with [her] hands'. (10-11) Jane the narrator offers her reading of *Goldsmith's History of Rome* as the basis for this abrupt change in temperament and the means by which she is able to form her rebellion; study of oppressed peoples in history aids her understanding of the injustice of her own situation. She compares John's behaviour to that of 'a murderer', 'a slave-driver', 'like the Roman emperors', admitting that she 'had drawn parallels in silence, which [she] never thought thus to have declared aloud'. (11) She rejects the oppressive behaviour of the Roman emperors and uses her knowledge of the subject to reject her position at the bottom of the hierarchy. When provoked, it is her reading which gives her the courage and grounding to assert herself and her human rights as an individual.

Emma Bovary's reading of Walter Scott heightens her understanding of art and culture in a rare moment of clarity when she and Charles attend the theatre in Rouen, although this scene does not award her any greater degree of self-understanding as Jane's reading does. In Flaubert's description of Emma's early reading at the time she attended the convent, the reader is told that Walter Scott played a significant role in her learning, through whom 'elle s'éprit de choses historiques [...] elle aurait voulu vivre dans quelque vieux manoir, [...] le coude sur la pierre et le menton dans la main, à regarder venir du fond de la campagne un cavalier à plume blanche qui galope sur un cheval noir'. (Flaubert 2001: 87) It is upon these images that she forms her romantic notions of chivalry, mimicking the

image of the woman looking out of the window in search of her gallant knight at numerous stages in the narrative. Her search is, however, in vain as neither Charles, Rodolphe nor Léon can fulfil her fantasies as derived from these stories. The stories of Walter Scott and *Paul et Virginie* require a setting, either environmental or historical, which is far removed from the 'moeurs de province' which rule Emma's existence. After her marriage to Charles, she dreams of these magical places, 'où les lendemains de mariage ont de plus suaves paresse', but comes to the conclusion that 'certains lieux sur la terre devaient produire du bonheur, comme une plante particulière au sol et qui pousse mal tout autre part'. (91) This idea could well have been derived from *Paul et Virginie*, for as soon as Virginie is removed from the humane, amicable behaviour of her kin on the idyllic Île de France (Mauritius) and placed in the higher echelons of Parisian life, she describes herself as 'une pauvre créature qui [a] peu d'esprit'. (De Saint-Pierre 2002: 89)

The literal way in which Emma interprets the texts of Scott and De Saint Pierre reflects some validity in the nineteenth-century fears surrounding how women were supposed to read, but the view of Emma as an uncritical reader is not left entirely uncomplicated by Flaubert. On the subject of Emma's historical reading of Scott and prevalent figures of women in history such as Jeanne d'Arc, the critic Czyba writes that she concentrates on these women not to 'comprendre la signification' of the figures, 'en les replaçant dans leur contexte sociologique mais pour les transformer en mythes d'existence éclatante et marquée par des émotions violentes'. (1983: 65) This argument certainly carries weight when compared to the images which dominate Emma's reverie, but even though she negates the authority of these authors in favour of creating her own narrative, this is not to say that she is incapable of understanding or intellectual development. To

return to the scene at the theatre in Rouen, the opera Emma and Charles attend is *Lucie de Lammermoor*, a libretto based on Scott's *The Bride of Lammermoor*, read by Emma in her youth. Despite the opera being a new (and long-awaited) experience for Emma, she is adept in her ability to make sense of the narrative thanks to her previous reading of Scott's novel: 'le souvenir du roman facilitant l'intelligence du libretto, elle suivait l'intrigue phrase à phrase'. (Flaubert 2001: 302) It could therefore be argued, at least on this occasion, that Emma's reading is successful in so far as it does broaden her mind and heighten her appreciation of culture in a way which would otherwise have been impossible. Although Flaubert's description of the emotional effects of the music upon Emma is lengthy and could be said to undermine this intellectual achievement by legitimising Emma's sentimentality, her achievement here is emphasised by Charles's lack thereof. His insistence on plaguing her with banal questions, which reveal his inherent misunderstanding of the plot that so engrosses Emma, reflects his intellectual mediocrity. After missing the fundamental elements of the narrative, Charles admits that this was due to the nature of opera, which he is clearly unaccustomed to: 'Il avouait, du reste, ne pas comprendre l'histoire, — à cause de la musique — qui nuisait beaucoup aux paroles'. (304) He is gauche in this respect, but his lack of sophistication is highlighted yet further by his ignorance of it: 'C'est que j'aime [...] à me rendre compte, tu sais bien'. (304) For Charles, culture remains inaccessible, but Emma's reading of Scott enables her to make sense of a new art form which reflects an ability for class transgression were the opportunity available to her.

Throughout this passage, the narrative alternates between Emma's immersion in the performance which lifts her, showing her a parallel vision of how her life could have been, 'si le hasard avait voulu', and the banalities of real life

which wrench her back down to earth. (306) As Lucie longs to fly away, 'Emma, de même, aurait voulu, fuyant la vie, s'envoyer dans une étreinte'. (302) Emma recognises all her passions and strife in Lucie's character and allows herself to be entirely absorbed in the performance: '[e]lle reconnaissait tous les enivrements et les angoisses dont elle avait manqué mourir. La voix de la chanteuse ne lui semblait être que le retentissement de sa conscience, et cette illusion qui la charmait quelque chose même de sa vie'. (303)

Unfortunately, this vision is rudely disturbed by Charles who pulls her back to reality: 'Pourquoi donc, demanda Bovary'. (304) This juxtaposition of the seductiveness of Emma's imagination fuelled by art, and the unpleasantness of reality recurs towards the end of the performance when she fixates on one of the male characters. Her interpretation is similar to the way she later conceives the image of the unrealisable man: 'la folie la saisit: il la regardait, c'est sûr! Elle eut envie de courir dans ses bras pour se réfugier en sa force, comme dans l'incarnation de l'amour même'. (306) Abruptly, this ecstatic scene is brought to an end when '[l]e rideau se baissa', extinguishing Emma's illusion and heightening the oppressiveness of her newly acknowledged surroundings: 'L'odeur du gaz se mêlait aux haleines; le vent des éventails rendait l'atmosphère plus étouffante'. (306) In comparison to the feelings the opera inspires, reality is stifling and claustrophobic; under these circumstances, can the reader really blame Emma for allowing herself to be captivated and transported by literature and art, however unwise this might be in the long-term? While Flaubert demonstrates the ill-effects of Emma's reading, moments such as this suggest that his criticism lies with society's provision and treatment of women as opposed to her personal recourse to romance novels. Emma is isolated and left to her own mind for amusement, through which she can interpret image and text to gain everything she lacks,

whether that be passionate love, class ascension, culture, spirituality, deep melancholy or physical or metaphorical escape. She is a victim of what Elizabeth Jean Sabiston deems a 'culture lag' for women, 'hazily aware of exciting expansions in the world about them but excluded from full participation in these activities by virtue of their womanhood'. (1987: 7) Society is the unspoken patriarchal force which presides over Emma's small-town experiences, both tempting and prohibiting escape. It is important to note that in *Madame Bovary*, Flaubert himself writes a novel anticipating the reader's response to his characters. While he does not use a first-person narrative as Brontë does, his use of *style indirect libre* captures a similar essence, leading the reader to empathise with Emma and understand her mistakes even if her actions are inadvisable.

The predicament that Flaubert creates for Emma becomes a challenge to society because it is society's prejudices that lead her to respond to reality in this way; he creates an anti-romance, perhaps as a reaction against the sort of novels that Emma reads that lull her, initially at least, into believing that female fulfilment lies in adhering to social convention, and ends at marriage. With the explosion of print culture, mid-century French society was profiting from the enthusiasm with which women like Emma consumed novels and yet did not provide adequate educational provision to equip them with the correct skills to scrutinise text, nor the social opportunities through which they could realise personal ambition. Emma is not naturally academic like Jane or Sue, but an incarnation of the average woman for whom political satire or philosophy might prove too ambitious. She reads what is available to her and applies her own personal motives as she is not provided with any other outlet for self-expression. As Laqueur states, '[n]o novel of the nineteenth century links the psychic economy of goods and the pleasures of the body more intimately; none is more subtle on the relationship between wanting the

latest novel or fashions and wanting sexual gratification'. (2003: 301) Flaubert's criticism of Emma's romance reading and financial excesses is a social criticism underlining the hypocrisy of a system which profits from the same consumerism that constitutes what it deems moral degradation. It is women such as Emma that bear the brunt of this system.

2.3 The Effects of Reading upon *Bildung*

While Emma is limited in the ways she is able to participate in society, Sue makes every effort to be an active participant in the world around her, particularly where debate and discussion are concerned. Having eschewed and then delayed marriage, she is initially at an advantage to Emma with regards to physical freedom and is better placed, as well as more inclined, to make an impact on her environment. She also forges deeper intellectual attachments to those around her than Emma, perhaps because her relationships with Jude and Phillotson are founded on shared appreciation of education and texts which forms the basis of their conversation. Of the novels under study, *Jude the Obscure* treats the theme of self-education most self-consciously, albeit mostly with regards to Jude's plight to gain admission to Christminster University. But it is Sue's unconventionality and questioning of accepted ideas that challenge Jude's intellect most rigorously, forcing him to criticise the validity of his own preconceptions. Both Jude and Phillotson admit that Sue's intellect is more thoroughly supported by textual evidence and analysis than theirs, leaving them almost powerless in any argument against her. "She has read ten times as much as I. Her intellect sparkles like diamonds, while mine smoulders like brown paper. ... She's one too many for me!" laments Phillotson when he finds that his own faculties pale in comparison to Sue's during their discussion of the dissolution of their marriage. (188) Similarly,

Jude's resignation, "[y]ou have read more than I", demonstrates acceptance of his defeat in the intellectual stakes. (122) It is Sue's intellect that Jude comes to miss most in the closing pages of the novel when she renounces her intellectual power and returns to Phillotson in a renaissance of her sense of duty after the death of her children — an event that she blames on her own self-indulgence. Sue's view, however, is not the view that Hardy impresses on his readers. Having presented the extent of Sue's efforts to educate herself, her intelligence, potential and moments of bravery in confronting convention, the reader is led to perceive Sue's conversion to conformity as a profound loss rather than evidence of prevailing justice. Study of *Jude the Obscure* as a *Bildungsroman* heightens the sense of tragedy the reader is left with at the end of the novel when the individual sees no alternative but to renounce that which constitutes the very essence of her character.

By contrast, although Jude's is the path that ends in death, it is Sue's retraction of companionship as she turns towards convention that leads to Jude's deterioration; it is a by-product of Sue's defeat rather than a direct defeat by society. Hardy's implication is that had Sue not reverted to a conventional path, the death of their children would have been a setback that Jude could overcome, allowing his *Bildung* to continue, as is evidenced by his response to Sue's conversion. He marks her intellectual break as a stark directional change, at odds with his own intellectual progress in which Sue played no small part: "She was once a woman whose intellect was to mine like a star to a benzoline lamp: who saw all my superstitions as cobwebs that she could brush away with a word. Then bitter affliction came to us, and her intellect broke, and she veered round to darkness". (325) Hardy's objective, as outlined in the Preface to the First Edition of *Jude the Obscure*, was 'to tell, without a mincing of words, of a deadly war

waged between flesh and spirit; and to point the tragedy of unfulfilled aims'. (5) Although not specified in this preface, the course these 'unfulfilled aims' take is dependent on gender in Sue's case, and class in Jude's. When Jude begins to have reservations about the compatibility of his (sexual) nature with the religious doctrines he ardently studies, he is at liberty, as a man, to reconsider his stance. On realising that his inherent sexuality and attraction to Sue are 'glaringly inconsistent' with his ambition towards the church, he proceeds to burn his texts. (177) Having done this, he is reassured by 'the sense of being no longer a hypocrite to himself [which] afforded his mind a relief which gave him calm'. (178) He achieves a sense of catharsis, moves on and his *Bildung* is allowed to continue.

Sue, unfortunately, enjoys no such luxury as a woman when she has to deal with her grief as a mother. She laments the naivety she and Jude laboured under in the assumption that their Romantic belief in the supremacy of nature and individual emotions could win out over the convention imposed by civilisation:

I said that it was [...] Nature's law and *raison d'être* that we should be joyful in what instincts she afforded us — instincts which civilization had taken upon itself to thwart. What dreadful things I said! And now Fate has given us this stab in the back for being such foes to take Nature at her word! (275)

Whilst Jude can retract his beliefs and destroy the evidence, Sue's daring to assert her own personal intellectual arguments, which prioritise individual feeling and temperament, leaves an indelible mark on her life, forcing her to 'veer round' to the conclusion: "We must conform!" (277) 'It is precisely Sue's femaleness which breaks her', argues Mary Jacobus, and '[t]hough she is enslaved in body, and

[Jude] enslaved by his own, he at least retains his intellectual freedom, railing against the state of things to the end'. (1975: 321, 323) This view is also supported by Penny Boumelha, who argues that Sue's conversion is as 'a result of the fact that certain social forces press harder on women [...] largely by virtue of the implication of their sexuality in child-bearing', leading to her reduction 'from a challenging articulacy to a tense and painful silence'. (2018: 153-4) This argument certainly carries weight, as it is her shame and ensuing inability to explain her pregnancy to Father Time that instigates the tragedy. One of the final images of Sue that the reader is left with is her 'clenching her teeth' and 'utter[ing] no cry' before submitting to Phillotson, reflecting the victory of flesh over spirit and the final defeat of Sue's aims as mentioned by Hardy in his Preface. (Hardy 2016: 324) The narrative of Sue's *Bildungsroman* ends in silence, repression and a muting of the self, whereas Jude continues to give free rein to will and expression, as far as his body will allow, until his death. Jude is at least able to retain his identity, whereas Sue is confined at the end to society's narrow and restrictive model of 'woman'.

In *Jane Eyre*, reading underpins the progression of Jane's self-development, which is highlighted by the 'red-room' episode and the subsequent alteration in her perspective on *Gulliver's Travels* (1726). In her introduction to the novel, Sally Shuttleworth claims that '[s]elfhood in *Jane Eyre* is defined primarily as a hidden interior space, rather than a process of social interaction and exchange' as it is for Sue. (2000: vii) This is true to a certain extent, but this is not to say that this understanding of the self does not aid Jane's integration into society, refining her authority in social exchange. This 'hidden interior space' that Shuttleworth speaks of is well-illustrated during Jane's time in the red-room, as her physical incarceration forces her into a state of introspection. Unlike Emma, whom images

excite, confuse, then deceive, appreciation of text lifts Jane to a higher level of understanding of her position in the world, leaving behind a more refined sense of perception.

This loss of innocence, though an important stage in her development, is not altogether pleasant for Jane. The grandeur and loneliness of the room converge in Jane's mind with the memory of her uncle, her victimisation in the Reed household and the stories she has read, conjuring supernatural images reminiscent of the gothic genre which was popular in the first half of the nineteenth century. The looking glass in this scene plays an important role in the development of Jane's self-perception and the understanding of her position in the social hierarchy, which accounts for the shift in her perspective on Swift's novel. Gilbert and Gubar suggest that the mirror acts as, 'a sort of chamber, a mysterious enclosure in which images of the self are trapped', forcing Jane to scrutinise herself and her reality. (1979: 340-1) When she catches a glimpse of herself in the looking-glass, she finds that her reflection is an amalgamation of fairy-tale characters such as those in the stories Bessie has told her: 'half fairy, half imp'. (2000: 14) Though these images are not strictly products of personal reading as they have been created by Bessie, given the previous gothic lens through which Jane studies Bewick's book, it can be inferred that this *mélange* of imagery passing through Jane's wounded and confused head has numerous influences at its source. She bears no judgement on either of these creatures, considering neither in terms of good or evil, but rather 'other' — something she does not yet quite understand with 'glittering eyes of fear'. (2000: 14)

In this state of vulnerable transition, she begins asking questions about her social position: 'Why was I always suffering, always brow-beaten, always accused, for ever condemned? Why could I never please? Why was it useless to try to win

anyone's favour?' (15) This is a critical point in the development of Jane's sense of justice, demonstrating resistance to society's assumptions about the place of woman and the limits of class. Her study of political tyranny in historical times leads her to conclude that her treatment is "unjust!" and her subsequent mode of reading evolves accordingly. (15) In her captivity, she considers means of escape or ways of rejecting her treatment, arriving at the solution of, 'running away, or, if that could not be effected, never eating or drinking more, and letting myself die', which she almost does during her flight from Thornfield and Rochester. These are often the inevitable conclusions to the nineteenth-century female character (along with suicide in the case of Emma Bovary and eternal condemnation to an unhappy marriage in that of Sue Bridehead), but the reader is reminded that there is an alternative outcome for Jane's *Bildungsroman* due to the presence of Jane's older first-person narrative voice.

On Jane's release, she declines Bessie's proffering a tart, but quickly seizes the chance to seek solace and nourishment in *Gulliver's Travels*. In this text, she had previously found 'a vein of interest deeper than what [she] found in fairy tales', perhaps because she sensed, but had not yet understood, the satirical intent of the author. (21) On this perusal, however, she finds her perception altered. Whereas before she 'doubted not that [she] might one day, by taking a long voyage, see with [her] own eyes the little fields, houses, and trees, the diminutive people', the idea of this journey now seems more sinister. (21) Although she states that she had previously preferred Swift's text to fairy tales, she appears to have been reading both on similarly superficial, fantastical levels. Rowe offers the explanation that 'Jane's attraction to the "elves" and "imps" of England and the Liliputians reflects her own feelings of diminution amid shadows cast by looming adult persecutors', but this statement, while valid in essence, is more applicable to

Jane's later perception of the novel. (1983: 74) Initially, it appears that her attraction to the text stemmed from its bearing no resemblance to her unpleasant reality; it is when she realises the social truths behind the narrative that she becomes unnerved by it. Where once Swift's images seemed like mere exaggerations designed to inspire a child's imagination, after Jane's awakening to the social and political issues that face her on her own journey, she loses the superficiality of her reading and notices the more subversive nature of Swift's imagery. In *Gulliver*, Jane recognises her own disillusionment: he begins his travels with an optimistic outlook, but his cynicism increases as he comes to realise that every creature or race he encounters is corrupt.

After witnessing first-hand the violent and unfeeling ways that humans can behave, Jane is no longer able to read *Gulliver's Travels* in the same naïve way; this time, she finds that all is, 'eerie and dreary' and 'Gulliver a most desolate wanderer'. (21) Like Gulliver, after experiencing the darker side of human nature she loses her innocence, discarding the book, along with the tart, as symbols of childhood pleasure she can no longer enjoy, neither able to regain her initial pleasure, nor wishing to yet delve further into the journey that awaits her. To a certain extent, it is already evident that Jane has rejected the fairy story, as it does not reflect the reality she is acquainted with: 'for as to the elves, having sought them in vain among the foxglove leaves and bells [...] I had at length made up my mind that they were all gone out of England'. (21) Her understanding that these tales are not realistic anticipates her rejection of Mr Rochester's proposal of elopement on the discovery of his first marriage to Bertha. Jane's rejection of *Gulliver* stems from her affiliation to him, as she too sees herself as a 'desolate wanderer' and therefore no longer derives comfort from the text. It is this affiliation that unites her more closely with the male *Bildungsroman*, meaning that she is

later able, 'according to masculine archetypes', to 'defy larger-than-life authorities and journey into foreign environments, seeking a rugged independence'. (Rowe 1983: 75) Despite Rowe's assertion that this path involves, 'sacrificing hearth and family comforts', it actually does the contrary; Jane's recognition of Rochester's baser instincts prolongs her journey but finally leads to the discovery of her family and a more mature understanding of love which takes account of her own feelings and allows her to reject St. John. She does not sacrifice hearth and home, but merely defers gratification, not hurrying to complete her story in a way which would be personally unsatisfactory. Effectively, her reading provides her with an understanding of herself which allows her to control the course of her *Bildungsroman*.

The clarity that Jane gains from reading is, unfortunately, never attainable for Emma Bovary. The theme of reading in *Madame Bovary* is first introduced as juxtaposed to her real-life experience of 'love' in the context of marriage to Charles, which occurs early in the novel: 'Emma cherchait à savoir ce que l'on entendait au juste dans la vie par les mots de félicité, de passion et d'ivresse, qui lui avaient paru si beaux dans les livres'. (Flaubert 2001: 84) The concept of 'seeming' is important in these last two quotations; in reality, Emma can lay claim to none of these feelings as she has not experienced any of them first hand. She can only understand that 'love' and marriage leave her with an enduring sense of lack despite their being heralded as the objective of female existence. Having not experienced it before, Emma is only able to predict how marital love should feel from books. '[L]e bonheur qui aurait dû resulter', 'elle avait cru', and, 'lui avait paru', present the discord between what she was led to expect from marriage and the reality she is confronted with. 'La vie' is juxtaposed to 'les livres', clearly identifying the disparity which is to constitute her downfall.

From the beginning, the reader is aware that Emma will not discover 'félicité', 'passion' or 'ivresse' with Charles, but as these are words commonly used in descriptions of romantic love in the books she reads, she is under the apprehension that experiencing these states of exultation are part of her rite of passage as a woman. As someone who has led a cloistered life, fuelled by longing with 'le front contre la fenêtre', she is almost given no choice but to seek realisation of what she feels she is due through alternative channels. With the backdrop of revolution at the end of the previous century, it was within the political interest to control the population through what Stephen Heath describes as the 'bourgeois tightening' of the institutions of marriage and the family. (1992: 81) If women were the 'sacrosanct figure' of the achievement of these institutions, divergence from this prescribed social model could spell political failure and renewed social chaos, and so was to be avoided at all costs. (81) Rejection of this system by a woman such as Emma threatens the basis of the political order on which the new government had been established, but also highlights its deficiencies from the perspective of the individual woman.

As an introduction to the specifics of Emma's literary habits, Flaubert writes, '[e]lle avait lu *Paul et Virginie* et elle avait rêvé', underlining the link between reading and dreaming. (Flaubert 2001: 84) The romantic style of this work, the idyllic setting on the Île de France and the sentimental relationship between Paul and Virginie form the basis for Emma's expectations of life. On their faraway isle, Paul and Virginie receive 'une éducation douce' which is inseparable from their blissful environment and cultivates 'la pureté et le contentement de leur âme'. (De Saint Pierre 2002: 49) They have none of the skills which would constitute an education in the traditional sense, unable even to write until they take pains to learn in order to compose letters to each other when Virginie is taken to France to

become a 'lady'. (see De Saint-Pierre 2002: 89-90) However, according to De Saint-Pierre, the type of primal tenderness enjoyed by Paul and Virginie is not attainable in mainland France where there are 'tant de préjugés contraires au bonheur'. (67) The true happiness felt by his characters can only be realised on a tropical island, completely removed from contemporary French society. They have neither clocks nor books, but this is of no consequence in De Saint-Pierre's vision: 'Après tout qu'avaient besoin ces jeunes gens d'être riches et savants à notre manière? leurs besoins et leurs ignorances ajoutaient encore à leur félicité [...] Ainsi croissaient deux enfants de la nature'. (67)

Through Emma's reading of *Paul et Virginie*, we are given no indication that she has understood the story on the level of its political message; what she derives from it is a series of sentimental images on which she forms her romantic ideals of life and love. Her 'rêve' comprises 'la maisonnette de bambous, le nègre Domingo, le chien Fidèle, mais surtout l'amitié de quelque bon petit frère', who brings her gifts of 'fruits rouges' and runs 'pieds nus sur le sable'. (Flaubert 2001: 84-5) The reader is already aware that Emma's life will take no such course with Charles and that their relationship is unable to function as the Paul/Virgine model does, not to mention the ideals about social equality and heroic animals. Despite devotion from Charles, who would give her a plentitude of 'gros baisers à pleine bouche', 'elle le repoussait, à demi souriante et ennuyée, comme on fait à un enfant qui se pend après vous'. (84) Charles, his mediocrity aside, could never satisfy her yearnings as they are rooted in fiction and often set in an environment detached from contemporary society or in an alternative historical period like the novels of Walter Scott. Emma, however, is undeniably the product of the society that she seeks both to remove herself from and immerse herself in. Ironically, she

desires the very effects of being 'riche' and 'savant' that *Paul et Virginie* warns against and therefore is a vessel of the prejudices criticised by De Saint-Piere.

She reads superficially to satisfy and feed her world view without absorbing deeper political meanings as Jane does, allowing her to better emulate the tropes of the upper classes that are valued and admired by society at large. This longing is further sustained by an obsession with Parisian life which she tries to experience through purchase and possession. Lheureux capitalises on this, allowing him to gain tighter and tighter control over the Bovary finances, which results eventually in the debt that leads to her suicide. Her delight in possession and susceptibility to flattery render her an easy victim; she reads people superficially, much in the same way that she reads texts — to romanticise her existence and convince herself that she can achieve, possess and experience that which is socially impossible for one of her class and gender. Unlike Jane, her reading does not make her a good judge of character, but rather increases her vulnerability on account of her appetite for possession and role-playing.

Romantic literature (as distinct from romance novels) features in Sue Bridehead's reading too, but she is able to decipher and manipulate these texts in a fashion that Emma Bovary does not attempt. Whereas Emma is slave to image, Sue seeks deeper meaning, mastering the art of justification through textual evidence. Like Emma, she aligns herself with the leading figures of the Romantic movement, but her motives are more academic than superficial. This said, both Sue and Emma use images from these texts to project the version of themselves that they want others to accept. Sue quotes Percy Shelley's *Epipsychidion*, begging Jude to relate the lines to the poet's celestial muse to her: "But say it's me! — say it's me!" (Hardy 2016: 201) Phillotson describes the nature of Sue and Jude's relationship as "Shelleyan" or like that of "Paul and Virginia", born into a

blissful and idealised existence and brought up like brother and sister (or cousins in this case), harbouring a pure and emotional attachment to one another that develops into romantic love. (190) Though Sue and Jude's relationship reaches emotional depths unrealisable to Emma and Charles Bovary by nature of their common intellectual interests, for Jude, this pure and intellectual attachment is complicated by a more earthly sexual desire from the moment he meets Sue in person. Towards the end of the novel, Sue admits that the trajectory of her feeling for him took a different course. "At first I did not love you, Jude; that I own", is transformed into a different feeling, motivated by her "craving to attract and captivate". (287) It can be inferred that the captivation she desires is reminiscent of that which Shelley conveys in *Epipsychidion* in relation to his muse, Emily, a woman he cannot possess as she is trapped like a '[p]oor captive bird' in a 'narrow cage'. (Shelley 1970: 412) Emily is able to function as Shelley's muse due to their separation; it is this inspiration for thought, emotion and imagination that she inspires in him that Sue wants to replicate with Jude, revealing her intention to "ennoble some man to high aims". (Hardy 2016: 127) Despite the academic and practical potential she demonstrates in her own right, the limitations of her social opportunities still lead her to believe that her ambitions can be satisfied through the achievements of men — a belief mistakenly shared by Emma when she encourages Charles to conduct the club foot operation.

Shelley's poem celebrates free love as an alternative to '[t]he dreariest and longest journey' of marriage and therefore concurs with Sue's own feelings about the institution. There is no evidence to suggest that Sue is in favour of multiple or simultaneous love affairs, but her attraction to lines which lament convention can be understood:

The code

Of modern morals, and the beaten road

Which those poor slaves with weary footsteps tread ... (Shelley
1970: 415)

She rejects conventional marriage on the same grounds as Shelley, valuing the understanding, emotion and '[i]magination!' that are able to thrive outside of a 'narrow' enslavement to 'one object' which builds a 'sepulchre for all eternity'. (Shelley 1970: 415) It can be concluded that this text would also have played a role in the formation of Sue's argument against Phillotson when she persuades him to "agree to free each other". (Hardy 2016: 182) Her reading strengthens her resolve to reject the misery of the 'beaten road' in favour of carving her own path based on the ebb and flow of her desires. However, while Hardy renders her 'a figure of Shelley idealism' through her attempts to remain a sexually unobtainable, ethereal vision to Jude, he illustrates that she is unable to commit entirely to Shelley's notion of 'free love' due to the social and moral ramifications of female sexuality. (Jacobus 1966: 30) It is Jude's demonstration of sexual freedom that highlights her struggle between liberation and convention. She is horrified at Jude's ability to separate sex and love with Arabella, while she went to great lengths to avoid physical commitment to Phillotson: "O it was treacherous of you to have her again! I jumped out of the window!" (199) She desires monogamy without the restrictions of marriage, but finds herself in a situation where she can neither express her own sexual desire nor abide Jude's expression of his. Motivated by jealousy, she progressively agrees to a more intimate relationship with Jude in an attempt to preserve his appreciation of her and prevent him from returning to Arabella. She is forced to acknowledge the double standard,

submitting to Jude with a sense of melancholy that subverts Shelley's avian reference, indicating an acceptance that she cannot remain the muse in his vision: "The little bird is caught at last". (217) Jude's reassurance that she is "only nested" in fact underlines her loss of freedom, confirming that the result of Sue's sexual yielding is domestication. (217) Despite Sue's attraction to the concept of 'free love' championed by Shelley, Hardy shows that women are prohibited from participation in Romantic expressions of desire by nature of the injustice of society's ownership of female sexuality.

Sue's subversion of poetic quotation continues into the final chapters of the novel after her conversion to conformity. When she visits Jude to inform him that Phillotson has agreed to remarry her "for form's sake", she quotes Robert Browning's poem, *The Statue and the Bust*: "But "the world and its ways have a certain worth" (I suppose)". (292-3) Despite Sue's use of this line to validate her position to Jude, this poem does not champion the virtues of chastity and adherence to marital law, but rather depicts marriage as being restrictive and decidedly less attractive than an affair between lovers who desire each other at first sight. The fact that Browning's lovers postpone meeting highlights the passing of time and the transience of both love and beauty, leading him to conclude that the real sin committed by the pair was not adultery or breach of contract, but procrastination and unwillingness to act on their impulses — their "enslavement to forms", as Jude puts it: 'And the sin I impute to each frustrate ghost / Is — the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin'. (Hardy 2016: 325, Browning 1954: 122) The real meaning of the line Sue quotes reflects the triviality of popular opinion, particularly when it conflicts with the will and desire of the individual. Although in conformity, '[w]e lose no friends and we gain no foes', this leads to an unfulfilled existence which is altogether worse than an immoral one from Browning's point of view.

(Browning 1954: 118) Sue's supplementation of "(I suppose)" to Browning's line betrays her reluctance in her decision to "double round the corner" in her philosophy on life; but she feels that her duty must be to capitulate, relinquish her individualist outlook and repent for her neglect of custom which led to her failure as a mother. (Hardy 2016: 293) She punishes herself for staking her 'counter' 'boldly' and so must retreat to a selfless existence as Phillotson's wife, centred on obedience and the suppression of free will. (Browning 1954: 121) Sue's reading of Browning is melancholic, highlighting the tragedy of her situation; in forgoing her freedom she forces herself to abstain from the pleasures and passions of life, which is itself transient. As we witness her relegation to the domestic sphere, Browning's words, 'the door she had passed was shut on her', have a more profound resonance. (Browning 1954: 115) Through her incarceration she sentences herself to an eternity of gazing out of windows, 'like a convent's chronicler', like the lady in Browning's poem or Emma Bovary, left forever wandering what might have been. (Browning 1954: 115)

With the control of women at the heart of nineteenth-century politics, there was much debate as to what might constitute suitable female reading material in order that they become pleasant and entertaining companions for their husbands without kindling "inappropriate' educational ambition'. (Flint 1993: 11) In Martyn Lyons's extensive studies on reading in nineteenth-century France, he discusses predominantly religious societies which were set up to oversee the dispersion of what were considered 'bons livres'. Interestingly, while authors like Sand, Zola and Balzac were still excluded from approved reading lists in 1908 (see Lyons 2001:15), the Société Franklin, which was granted government authorisation in 1862, authorised 'standard classics such as *Paul et Virginie*' and the Commission des Bibliothèques Populaires approved Walter Scott by request from the

Education Ministry in 1881. (2001: 33) The reasons Lyons cites for the popularity and politically 'acceptable' nature of Scott's novels are derived from their historicism: 'Les critiques semblent avoir surtout apprécié chez Scott sa façon de situer l'action de ses romans dans un lieu historique authentique'. (1987: 138) Moreover, '[l]es héroïnes de Scott [...] sont parfaites, sans passion, angéliques'. (141) Scott's novels, like *Paul et Virginie*, are removed from the contemporary setting and therefore it could be argued that they were deemed to be less able to directly criticise it. Similarly, Scott's heroines were generally not feared to destabilise the status quo as they have a strong sense of duty and are willing to sacrifice themselves for noble causes. (see Williams 1984: 55) In appearance, Emma Bovary resembles Alexander Welsh's notion of Scott's 'dark heroine', although she falls short in her commitment to duty and is married off in the traditional fashion like the 'blonde heroine'. Her characteristics are reminiscent of those of Minna Troil in *The Pirate* (1822), who has long dark hair and is deeply moved by the sea like Emma; but while Minna likes '[t]he ocean in all its varied forms of sublimity and terror', Emma 'n'aimait la mer qu'à cause de ses temptêtes'. (Scott 1996: 22, Flaubert 2001: 86) On one hand, it could be argued that Flaubert casts Emma as a failed Scott heroine: her feeling is more superficial than that of Minna and she prioritises herself over any sense of duty. On the other hand, she encapsulates some aspects of the 'dark heroine' perfectly: she 'long[s] to participate in events. [She] suffer[s] internally from the pressure of [her] own feelings. [She] allow[s] her feeling to dictate to [her] reason, and seem[s] to symbolize passion itself'. (Welsh 2014: 49)

Flaubert illustrates that the chivalry and heroism that feature in Scott and De Saint-Pierre's novels are strikingly absent from Emma's environment where nothing of particular note occurs, especially to women, who have no real power,

influence or objective. It is for this reason that Emma possesses herself of the exotic traits of both authors' works in an attempt to feel the plethora of emotions that officially condoned books have led her to believe are possible in the female constitution. The fact that she reads 'approved' and religious texts indicates that a reader can apply personal agendas or desires to any work, no matter how 'innocent' or 'appropriate' society deems it. Emma posits value and excitement where society dictates and demonstrates possibility — in symbols of wealth and the concept of romantic love. Flaubert suggests that by limiting the scope of female ambition to these superficial concepts, it follows that women such as Emma, with no professional remit or occupation of their own, will ardently pursue them by whatever means necessary. This is not 'self-education' according to its strict definition, but a self-delusion largely incited by society's refusal to liberate women. Emma simply strives to liberate herself through the channels that are available to her.

In her quest for emotional and sensual fulfilment, Emma retains and amalgamates tropes from the texts she reads, resulting in the kindling of ambition which cannot be reconciled with her social reality. Carla L. Peterson argues that 'Emma's imagination can accommodate practically everything by juxtaposition of detail [...]. Thus her readings present Emma with remarkably diverse images and, rather than focussing on one particular set of images, she accepts them all'. (1980: 175-6) After dancing with the Vicomte at the Marquis's ball, she reads the 'journaux des femmes', *La Corbeille* and *Sylphe des Salons* with a view to accessing elements of the high society to which she has been but fleetingly introduced: 'Elle dévorait, sans en rien penser, tous les comptes rendus de premières représentations, de courses et de soirées, s'intéressait au début d'une chanteuse, à l'ouverture d'un magasin'. (Flaubert 2001: 111) This quest for wish-

fulfilment then extends to the novels of Eugène Sue, Balzac and Sand which she reads, 'not for their social commentary', but for the 'sentimental and material detail, even in the presence of more moral content', or indeed parody, metaphor or irony. (Hurlburt 2011-12: 88) In Sue, she absorbs 'des descriptions d'ameublements', and in Balzac and Sand, 'des assouvissements imaginaires pour ses convoitises personnelles'. (Flaubert 2001: 111) Emma's reading is fragmented and superficial rather than holistic or critical, resulting in the retention only of images or 'generalities of plot [...] from which she can extract pleasing visions of life that she can apply to her own'. (Peterson 1980: 171) This is a process which denies the authority of the author and prioritises the assertion of the self, thereby subverting the passivity of the act of reading. Critics such as Peterson deem Emma's reading habit as 'mis-reading' stemming from an 'imperfect absorption of convent education', but this trivialises society's role in the proceedings. (Peterson 1980: 171) Her ambitions, desires and approach to reading are not generated in a vacuum: the aestheticism and superficiality associated with the sphere of female activity encourage Emma to develop a mode of (mis-)reading that accords to these values. Furthermore, her reading provides her with a means of self-exploration, however temporary, which would have been otherwise unavailable. Her assimilation of images allows her to learn how to project herself into roles which are at odds with reality, but endow her with a certain degree of autonomy, along with a marginal amount of authorial power in her own *histoire*, through which she can transgress the boundaries imposed on her sex. (Hurlburt 2011-12: 84) Her reading does contribute to her downfall, but society's culpability is overarching. Her motives for committing suicide stem from her realisation that she is socially and financially destitute and that her channels for self-fulfilment have become barred; but this leads the reader to question whether the same result could really

have been avoided had she committed herself to a simple, mundane existence with Charles in which her ambitions were equally unattainable. If suicide is the natural conclusion for a woman of Emma's temperament in either scenario, reading is arguably a vital and diverse force which adds colour and interest to her *Bildung* throughout its short duration.

This said, the argument that Emma's superficial approach to reading leads her to wilfully romanticise or idealise the intentions of men like Rodolphe and Lheureux is justified, as it is integral to her role-playing. Her objective is not clarity, but illusion, which plays conveniently into Lheureux's hands in particular. Conversely, for Jane Eyre, reading of texts like *Gulliver's Travels*, combined with her personal trauma in the red-room, makes her a better judge of character as she experiences the baser, more Machiavellian side of human nature in her infancy. She loses her naivety and her trust in people early in her journey, enabling her to detect deceitful or disingenuous behaviour in others. In the knowledge that humans do not always have the best interests of others at heart, her social motives differ from Emma's. Emma disregards the reality of people's intentions in order to replicate her fantasies, whereas Jane scrutinises them in order to decipher their truth.

When Mr Brocklehurst is brought into the Reed household to assess Jane for Lowood school, he is first described as, 'a black pillar', reminding readers of Swift of the 'tower-like men and women' of Brobdingnag encountered by Gulliver. (2000: 21) Brontë introduces him as something to be understood and overcome by Jane. She sees herself as almost Lilliputian in size in comparison: 'he seemed to be a tall gentleman; but then I was very small'. (32) Jane's impression is consolidated on examination of his face, his features prominent to the point of exaggeration: 'what a face he had [...] what a great nose! and what a mouth! and what large

prominent teeth!' (32) This description clearly resembles the wolf in grandma's clothing in *Little Red Riding Hood* (an observation also made by Rowe), but Jane is not as easily deceived as Red. Jane's perception of Mr Brocklehurst as an obstacle to be overcome demonstrates the positive influence of her reading on her powers of perception. Almost instantly, he confirms the validity of Jane's 'black pillar' analysis; he claims to uphold religious values, but soon exhibits his true hypocritical, self-serving and patriarchal nature, rendering his disguise significantly less effective than that of the wolf he resembles.

In conversation with Jane, Brocklehurst proceeds to test whether she is a good child or not by quizzing her on the nature of her religious reading. To his interrogation of her Bible-reading habits, she replies that she "sometimes" reads it and that she likes "Revelations, and Genesis and Samuel, and a little bit of Exodus, and some parts of Kings and Chronicles, and Job and Jonah". (33) For a child of only ten with no schooling, she presents herself as a knowledgeable and intelligent reader, able to name her preferences without prior coaching or preparation. Even after his account of a talented boy, "who knows six Psalms by heart", Jane does not allow herself to be coerced; she simply responds that "Psalms are not interesting", rejecting his attempts to dominate her. (33) Her reading of religious texts is not formulaic or mechanical; she selects the parts that appeal to her and reads them for pleasure. Despite already being "a naughty little girl" in Brocklehurst's eyes, she ignores this opportunity to 'redeem' herself by copying the angelic little boy in his anecdote. (32) One possible reason for her attraction to the books she lists could be that they are simply more fantastical and therefore more appealing to the mind of a child in their inclusion of lions, whales and quests. As in *Gulliver's Travels*, they feature journeys to be followed, obstacles to be overcome and lessons to be learned in the characters' navigation

of the world and their relationship with God; effectively, she favours the adventure story with the male protagonist — the more typical model of the *Bildungsroman*. Jane realises that she too will face such obstacles, although she does not yet know her place in the world or which course her journey will take. The dichotomy of coercion and rejection in this scene also anticipates a repetition of this pattern at later stages in the novel, most notably when she rejects the conclusions to her story imposed first by Rochester, then by St. John. In this research, *Jane Eyre* adheres most closely to the narrative of the archetypal male *Bildungsroman*, as she is the only protagonist who acquires true clarity and understanding as her story progresses without having to sacrifice important elements of her identity to do so.

Sue Bridehead is not so fortunate, however. Having asserted herself throughout the narrative of *Jude the Obscure*, she punishes herself for doing so at the last hurdle when she comes to realise that living unconventionally is not reconcilable with the reality of having of children. Aware, if not consciously acknowledging, of the immensity of society as foe, Sue reads to add courage to her conviction that “[d]omestic laws should be made according to temperaments [...]. If people are at all peculiar in character they have to suffer from the very rules that produce comfort in others!” (182) Her mode of learning and choice of text are directed towards the objective of evidencing her principles so as that she might assert and defend herself.

Sue’s restlessness is underpinned by a religious anxiety that reflects the crisis of faith in the latter half of the nineteenth century. On Jude’s arrival in Christminster, he recalls, ‘the founders of the religious school called Tractarian [...] the echoes of whose teachings had influenced him even in his obscure home’. (Hardy 2016: 67) His reference is to John Newman, John Keble and Edward

Pusey, the leaders of the Oxford Movement in the 1830s and 1840s. According to Basil Willey, the foundation of this movement revealed the spread of religious uncertainty and the loss of trust in the established Protestant Church which gathered momentum over the century: 'Something must have been rotten in the state of Protestantism for a Catholic movement started by a few academic clergyman to have attracted so much attention'. (Willey 1949: 83) Hardy conveys this unrest through Sue on her entrance into the novel. On her walk into the countryside, her attention is attracted by a vendor's statuettes of Roman deities, not least because they are positioned 'almost in a line between herself and the church towers of the city', highlighting 'an oddly foreign and contrasting set of ideas in comparison'. (Hardy 2016: 79) She is presented with an alternative doctrine, desiring the statues precisely for their anti-Christian value. Settling on Venus and Apollo, she 'clasp[s] them as treasures', but soon recognises her transgression, having broken the commandments that forbid the worship of false gods and idolatry. (79)

Returning to her lodgings, Sue conceals her purchase from her landlady, Miss Fontover, by leading her to believe that she has bought replicas of Christian saints. When Sue is certain she won't be disturbed, she unpacks them with 'zest', complementing her sin by reading Gibbon's *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire: Vol.2* (1781) and Swinburne's *Hymn to Proserpine* (1866). (81) The chapter of *Decline and Fall* that she chooses describes Julian the Apostate's conversion to Paganism following his, 'devout and sincere attachment for the Gods of Athens and Rome'. (Gibbon 2012: 235) Having concealed the statues, it is not difficult to imagine why Sue might feel a kinship to Julian, who also keeps his devotion secret due to the dangers which might arise from profession of his true faith. The chapter Sue reads closes with the following lines:

But as every act of dissimulation must be painful to an ingenuous spirit, the profession of Christianity increased the aversion of Julian for a religion which oppressed the freedom of his mind, and compelled him to hold a conduct repugnant to the noblest attributes of human nature, sincerity and courage.
(242)

It could be suggested that Sue interprets these lines as a justification of her own uneasiness in a society which insists upon oppression of both mind and body in opposition to human nature and natural law. Such reading connects her to a broader intellectual community which is not available to her in Christminster.

Swinburne's poem supports this sentiment. Written as a rebellion against conventional Christianity, it describes it as 'barren' (line 17), turning the world 'grey' (line 35) and worsening the hardships that are already prevalent:

A little while and we shall die; shall life not thrive as it may?

For no man under the sky lives twice, outliving his day.

And grief is a grievous thing, and man hath enough of his tears:

Why should he labour, and bring fresh grief to blacken his years?

(Swinburne 1973: lines 31-34, 658-9)

In comparison to the dull images Swinburne associates with Christ and his influence, the lines depicting Venus, or Cytherean as he refers to her, are sensuous and full of colour. Mary and Jesus are 'pale' (lines 35 and 81) in comparison to the bloom of Venus:

Not as thine, not as thine was our mother, a blossom of flowering
seas,
Clothed round with the world's desire as with raiment, and fair as the
foam.
And fleeter than kindled fire, and a goddess, and mother of Rome.
(Swinburne 1973: lines 78-80, 660)

As the goddess of love, sex, fertility and prosperity, her influence does not work against human nature, but in harmony with it, earning her, in Swinburne's eyes, the well-deserved title of 'goddess' through whose name 'earth grew sweet'. (line 84) This presents a contrast to the rules imposed by Christianity which function through restriction of human behaviour rather than through celebration of it. This approach accords to Sue's desire for domestic laws to be established according to temperament, thus in service of the individual as opposed to the state.

Sue selects these texts as justification of her own uneasiness as if to reassure herself that others share her urge to 'kick' against the established order. (Hardy 2016: 176) Hardy suggests that Miss Fontover shares Sue's religious anxiety despite her abhorrence of the Pagan figures, which she dutifully destroys on discovery. Her inclinations, however, veer towards Catholicism: she 'knew the Christian Year by heart', a collection of poems by John Keble, one of the Tractarian leaders. (80) Whilst Sue's statues and texts bear 'an odd contrast to the environment of text and martyr, and the Gothic-framed Crucifix-picture', both women's beliefs reflect the climate of anxiety, unrest and the questioning of nineteenth-century 'truths' that was taking place in England towards the end of the century. (81) Jude, his knowledge of Newman notwithstanding, seems comparatively innocent of the severity of the factions appearing in the established

church, assuming that Miss Fontover breaks Sue's statutes on account of their being too 'Popish'. (87)

Sue mocks Jude for being in the 'Tractarian stage' of his formation, casting herself as the more enlightened of the two on the basis of her having reached a more advanced state of disillusionment. While Sue reads Gibbon and Swinburne with her statues, Jude labours over a passage in the Greek New Testament which praises the existence of one God and one Jesus Christ with 'an indescribable enchantment'. (82) According to Robert B. Heilman, Sue 'has the style of the blue-stocking who has found a new key to truth and is intolerant of all who have not opened the same door', but this attitude is dismissive of the efforts Sue has taken to educate and understand herself in an environment hostile to the female intellect and alternative gods, illustrated by Hardy through Miss Fontover's aggression. (1966: 318) The bravery of Sue's behaviour in these matters is undeniable and her 'intolerance' can be better understood as self-assertion. After her dismissal of Jude's Tractarian phase, she declines his offer to join him in ritualistic prayer and instead suggests making him "a new New Testament", by 'cutting up' and 're-arranging' the official text in order to render it "twice as interesting as before, and twice as understandable". (Hardy 2016: 125-126) Her desire to rewrite the sacred text underlines her distrust of the established institutions on which Christminster is founded, as well as her propensity to question the validity of traditions in modern society.

She takes issue with the way that academics and ministers, such as those who reject Jude's application to the Christminster colleges, grant themselves the authority to doctor texts in such a way as to deny natural law and human passion in order to establish a climate of control and repression. The example Sue uses is 'Solomon's Song', a sensuous song which celebrates eroticism, sexual intimacy

and desire as being akin to nature and fertility. The passage containing the lines '[t]hy lips, O my spouse; drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk *are* under thy tongue' end with a direct invitation to the woman's lover to indulge in her beauty and sexuality: 'Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits'. (Solomon's Song 4:11, 4:16) Evidently, this assertion of female sexuality was problematic for the established church; denying the sexuality of the lines, it claimed instead that they were an allegory for the relationship between God and the Church. It is this manipulation of text to which Sue objects — the attitude with which established institutions, "explain[] away the real nature of that rhapsody', to negate female sexuality and avoid challenge to their doctrine. (126) Although she claims that "people have no right to falsify the Bible!" she intends to do just this to refute the oppression of the individual. (126) This act of re-arrangement is without doubt an act of transgression; not only has she gained access to men's texts, in this case the very cornerstone of Christminster itself, but she seeks mastery of them.

To conclude this section, Jane Eyre, Emma Bovary and Sue Bridehead all read as a reaction against the restriction of their environments, but with differing motives. While Jane initially reads to achieve comfort and escape as an outsider in her aunt's house, it has an elucidating effect which facilitates an understanding of herself, others and the path ahead. Her intellectual curiosity is captured by history, satire and adventure which encourage her to read and think on a critical level and apply the same analysis to her surroundings. It is through these processes that she is able to assess her relationship to the world, rendering her more resilient and independent. The result is that she develops an intolerance of injustice, refuting attempts to threaten her autonomy. Reading supports her self-assertion and plays a significant part in the success of her *Bildung*. Her quest is for truth, and so she is

more aware of the dubious designs of others than Emma, whose consumption of books for escapist purposes spans the length of *Madame Bovary*. Her reading consists largely of romance novels, or Romantic literature, which she reads superficially in order to satisfy the desire and ambition that the parameters of the domestic sphere forbid her to explore. She does not develop her critical faculties like Jane and Sue because she reads in pursuit of possession and emotion which are not attainable in her reality. As society places importance on materialism and romantic love for women, it is logical to anticipate that these concepts will dominate the approach that women such as Emma apply to their reading, regardless of the material they are provided with. Although her reading contributes to her downfall, it also offers her some temporary control over her narrative, adding interest and excitement to an otherwise tedious and colourless existence with Charles. Self-delusion is the outcome of her approach to reading, but Flaubert presents this as an understandable response to society's expectations of women.

Sue, like Jane, obtains clarity from texts, but uses them to strengthen and justify her challenge to the status quo. Through Sue's employment of these texts in the context of intellectual debate and self-defence, Hardy demonstrates her intellectual vigour as a measure of her success within a society that does not welcome the cultivation of the female intellect. Her reading of philosophy and Romantic literature connect her to an intellectual community of men, providing her with a sense of support in her battle between liberation and convention. Her reading educates her beyond the general understanding of society, but nevertheless, in the end she is still victim to its prejudices. Hardy does not present her self-imposed regression as a justified punishment, but as a tragic loss to society and to Jude. Her reading exemplifies her potential and bravery, enabling her, like Jane, to assert herself against convention on numerous occasions. For

each of these protagonists, reading is a subversive act, posing a challenge to society's prescription for women and the formal education they receive. It is used as a means of self-development or self-satisfaction irrespective of its value to society, which grants them a sense of independence. In the case of Jane and Sue, the skills developed from their academic approach to reading also contribute to their ability to support themselves independently of men, which will be discussed further in the following chapter.

Chapter Three: Skills and Accomplishments

'Accomplishment, unless it is the ornament of a cultivated mind, is like a fine dress upon a vulgar person', wrote domestic moralist Elizabeth Sandford in her book *Female Improvement* of 1836. (Sandford 1836: 38) Her view was that 'accomplishments' should be regarded as subsidiary attainments to complement rather than constitute female intellect. Sandford's notion of 'a cultivated mind' appears to refer to a mind which has undergone scholastic or academic training; a mind fuelled by intellectual 'curiosity' without vanity or marriage as its sole objective. In this chapter, the fashion for the acquisition of the 'accomplishments' will be examined with a view to demonstrating how the personal pursuit of activities such as music, drawing and foreign languages had broader social implications. According to educational theorists Maria Edgeworth and Richard Lovell Edgeworth, accomplishments carried public and private value, but their main social appeal was that they were broadly considered 'objects of universal admiration'. (Edgeworth 1801: 6) While they consider their 'chief praise' to be their 'value as resources against ennui', the Edgeworths appreciate that the popularity of the accomplishments can largely be attributed to their cultural capital: 'they are tickets of admission to fashionable company' and 'they are supposed to increase a young lady's chance of a prize in the matrimonial lottery'. (Edgeworth 1801: 6) Herein lies the potentially problematic nature of accomplishments: in many cases, their primary function was not to satisfy a woman's intellectual curiosity, but to attract a husband or improve social status. As described by Green, it was desirable for the nineteenth-century woman to fashion herself into an 'accomplished lady', as it would 'foster the skills [...] to palliate or complement

masculine intellect without interfering with its privileges'. (2001: 110) From a patriarchal perspective, marrying an 'accomplished lady' was a safe means of obtaining an amusing companion without incurring any challenge; viewed in such a light, the accomplishments prepare women, to recall the words of Rousseau, 'pour plaire et pour être subjuguée'. (2009: 517)

While, as can be understood from the Edgeworths' description, accomplishments were generally appreciated as attributes that played to women's social advantage, they were also emblems of objectification, and even weakness, that cemented women within their prescribed sphere. This can be seen in Rousseau's description of Sophie in *Émile*. Despite harbouring some natural ability, she does not devote much time to cultivating it, 'contentée d'exercer sa jolie voix à chanter juste et avec goût'. (2009: 571) She is taught the rudimentary elements of singing and dancing by her parents and given a few lessons on the harpsichord, seemingly only to enhance the quality of her voice, rendering it 'plus doux' in comparison to the instrument. (571) Though she comes to 'sentir les charmes de l'expression', Rousseau underlines the fact that these activities result in the development of 'un goût plutôt qu'un talent; elle ne sait point déchiffrer un air sur la note'. (571) One is left with the impression that Sophie has been led to practise music for solely decorative purposes. If marriage and pleasant, undemanding entertainment were the principal motives behind the pursuit of these accomplishments, their reputation as 'showy' and 'superficial' pursuits carries weight. (Thormählen 2007: 103)

The division in purpose between pursuit of the accomplishments for reasons of personal interest and pursuit of the accomplishments with the objective of some type of social gain can be likened to Matthew Arnold's discussion of culture:

The culture which is supposed to plume itself on a smattering of Greek and Latin is a culture which is begotten by nothing so intellectual as curiosity; it is valued either out of sheer vanity and ignorance or else as an engine of social and class distinction, separating its holder, like a badge or title, from other people who have not got it. (1949: 471-2)

Arnold makes the distinction here between culture as a vehicle for curiosity and true intellectual development and culture as a commodity used to distinguish those who possess it from those who do not in the way that Charlotte Brontë differentiates Jane Eyre's love for learning from Blanche Ingram's posturing to win Mr Rochester's affection and fortune. Hardy makes a similar assertion in his juxtaposition of the fruits of Jude's 'private study' of Latin and the ironically more limited understanding of the Christminster undergraduates. Challenging Jude to recite the Creed in Latin, the undergraduates jeer and mock him from a position of privilege without 'the slightest conception of a single word'. (Hardy 2016: 102) Despite his hardships, Jude acquires significantly more than a 'smattering' of Latin, yet his efforts to be accepted at Christminster University are in vain; he is denied admission on the basis that he will 'have a much better chance of success in life by remaining in [his] own sphere' as a 'working-man'. (99) The undergraduates have access to learning and culture that Jude can only dream of, but are devoid of the intellectual passion and willingness to graft that propel him. By uniting intellectually curious characters and juxtaposing them to the less deserving but more privileged, Hardy indicates that Jude and Sue are the kinds of people the university should be catering for if it is truly a beacon of academic prestige. The fact that it either bars or does not consider them as worthy candidates underlines the hypocrisy and illogic of institutions such as

Christminster, which symbolise the problematic fusion of tradition and social prejudice on a broader scale.

Arnold's attitude towards culture as commodity anticipates his use of the term 'Philistine' to condemn the peddlers of such goods. Thus described, 'culture' is more than just a marker of status; as an 'engine' of class distinction, it has agency in contributing to the divisions in society and to the maintenance of the status quo. A 'smattering of Greek and Latin' aids the defence of the status quo against the forces of progress. For this defence to be successful it must exclude, rather than include, the majority, and the most obvious exemplars of exclusion in the nineteenth century were politics (the franchise) and education. In England, women were denied the vote entirely until after the First World War when, in 1918, women over thirty became enfranchised. Women's enfranchisement was not awarded on a par with men's, however, until 1928 when women over the age of twenty-one gained entry to the electorate. In France, this wait endured until the latter half of the Second World War in 1944. Men of the upper-classes were, as exemplified by Hardy, the gate-keepers of the citadel; as those with political influence, they also controlled access to greater participation in education and, consequently, politics, so the cycle was perpetuated. Class and gender dictated social opportunities and the resulting place in the social hierarchy; affected by both, women occupied the last place amongst the excluded.

The fact that accomplishments featured significantly in women's education in both England and France reflects the domestic role that women were expected to occupy. The often haphazard instruction, as exemplified by Rousseau's Sophie, demonstrates the fact that proficiency was less important than appearance, meaning that these activities were not intended to form the basis upon which women could support themselves. In England, after religion, the accomplishments

'were regarded as the second pillar of girls' education from the middle classes upwards', as they were symbols of class status which could reflect the respectability of a family or facilitate social advancement through an advantageous marriage. (Thormählen 2007: 102) As female education was intended to be 'essentially moral and religious', the accomplishments posed a moral dilemma which could detract from the objective of creating virtuous, modest and selfless champions of religious morality. (McMillan 2000: 98) As the accomplishments were often geared towards exhibition in order for women to attract a husband, in such cases, the religious motivation was undermined if not erased entirely, thus rendering the practice of arts such as music, drawing and dancing theoretically morally dubious. According to Sandford, there were a number of potentially damaging outcomes of devoting too much time to 'trifles' or 'ornamental' pursuits: they were 'apt to produce frivolity of mind' and, importantly, they may paradoxically detract from more useful 'homely employments', particularly in girls 'qualified to fill only a subordinate rank'. (1836: 37-8)

Arguments surrounding the social nature of 'accomplishments' were also contradictory: on the one hand, musical accomplishments in particular were highly respected for their entertainment value, not least at gatherings at which attendees were not well-acquainted. In this instance, Sandford writes in defence of the activity: 'In such cases, do not the fine arts afford a subject which we may pleasantly discuss? and do they not thus often throw down a barrier of reserve, and even pave the way for an influence which it may be most important to establish?' (42) Articulated in this way, performance-related 'accomplishments' can be interpreted as a tool through which social and even business links might be forged by providing common ground on which guests can begin to build conversation. On the other hand, it was the performance aspect itself that caused

concern as to the evolution of the personality and temperament of the performer, given that practice of these arts was often intended for 'mere externals' and 'show'. (Anon 1826: 2) The anonymous author of *The Complete Governess* (1826) evaluates an education focused predominantly on accomplishments as evidencing a 'want of mental culture', which can be likened to Matthew Arnold's argument. (3) This 'want' denotes the same lack of intellectual substance inherent in the acquisition of a 'smattering' of the classics, underlining the absence of personal development as a learning objective. If applause is the motivating factor, it is logical to expect that vanity will be born out of such exhibition without true intellect or agreeable temperament in tow. Herein lies the paradox of the accomplishments: they were simultaneously sought after, revered, criticised and suspect.

The point of distinction between an 'accomplished' lady and a superficial or vain one appears to be a matter of motive and approach. To return to Sandford's argument, '[a]ccomplishment is a graceful addition when the groundwork is complete [...] [It] is the polish; but the gem that is not precious is not susceptible of lustre'. (1836: 38) In other words, 'accomplishments' are admirable when practised to complement the development of an even, pleasant temperament or as a creative diversion; they become questionable when their external theatrical benefits outweigh the personal internal benefits of the performer or artist. Similar arguments were also made by French educators such as Madame Campan who wrote to warn mothers of the pitfalls that they might overlook when concentrating on fashioning their daughters into budding celebrities: 'Les talens [*sic.*] répandent un grand charme sur la vie; ils animent la solitude, ils complètent le bonheur, ils consolent le chagrin; mais c'est dans l'intérieur du logis qu'ils sont utiles et doux, ailleurs ils peuvent devenir funestes'. (1826: 157) She advocates the practice of 'talents' in addition to the diverse domestic abilities girls must develop in an effort

to deter mothers from becoming distracted by 'le sot et dangereux amour-propre qui lui fait briguer des applaudissemens [sic.] pour [leurs] enfans [sic.]' when their daughters are destined for the home as opposed to the stage: 'Comment l'élève comprendra-t-elle que son orgueil doit un jour reposer sur les devoirs bien remplis d'épouse économe, de mère laborieuse'. (159) Campan's aversion to the temptation and illusion that result from performance and praise can be attributed to the concern that they might in fact distract mothers and daughters from the inevitable duties of womanhood: how would young performers be able to reconcile themselves to the domestic sphere when it will not occasion the admiration to which they have become accustomed?

The novels under study in this research consider the accomplishments through a variety of approaches and to differing ends. In the English novels 'accomplishments' can be more accurately considered as 'skills'. Brontë presents the effects of Jane's skills as being comparable to those of her reading: they are proof of the progress she makes in her formative years, reflect the fruits of her efforts in self-improvement and are instrumental in her position as governess. Furthermore, Brontë provides a critique of upper-class attitudes towards the role and effect of the accomplishments by leading the reader to compare Jane's temperament to that of Blanche Ingram. Similarly, though Hardy does not go into detail about the acquisition of Sue's skills, he presents her artistic talents in a positive light as proof of her diverse capabilities and the potential on which she could capitalise were there greater opportunities for women which could be seized without judgement or prejudice.

In contrast, the French novels depict accomplishments in a more negative light and do not equate them so closely with the characters' potential or progress. Sand portrays the accomplishments in *Valentine* as a marker of class and a

central point of her criticism of girls' education in general. She also touches on the perceived merits and pitfalls of some of the individual accomplishments in order to illustrate how they are weaponised by society as a means of judging women. In *Madame Bovary*, Flaubert's depiction of Emma's 'accomplishments' is largely underpinned by a sexual undercurrent, although it is not always clear whether Emma intends them for this purpose or not. It is, however, evident that she does not practise music or drawing for any personal intellectual or creative gratification, but requires others to observe and admire her; by emulating the skills and pastimes of the upper classes, she is better placed to mimic their habits in the roles that she assumes.

3.1 Jane Eyre, Sue Bridehead and the Power of Skills

In *Jane Eyre*, Jane's mastery of certain 'accomplishments' is testament to the progress she makes, allowing her to evolve from lowly orphan dependant to skilled governess. Although this role still entails some dependence, it is one on which she can support herself, thanks to the cultivation of her skills at Lowood and through her personal endeavours. It is thus that she broadens her opportunities and opens up the trajectory of her *Bildungsroman*: these skills allow her to unlock new environments and propel her into the next stage of her development. However, the way in which Brontë incorporates the accomplishments into the narrative also depicts their usefulness as a social tool through which society can judge a woman's worth and class status. Rochester does this upon learning that Jane is his governess, testing her accomplishments as though they enable him to assess her. After mocking her schooling, interrogating her on the curriculum she followed, he demands she exhibit her piano-playing skills despite her disclaimer that she only plays "[a] little". (124) The retort with which he replies ridicules the pretence

of modesty impressed on girls by their schooling and social expectations: “Of course: that is the established answer” (124). However, this does not prevent him from judging her by these standards. After she defers to his request, he concludes: “You play a *little*, I see; like any other English school-girl: perhaps rather better than some, but not well” (124). His tone is condescending and he appears keen to highlight his perception of her mediocrity, possibly as a means of establishing his superiority; his reaction to her playing gives the further impression that his expectations of Lowood, and perhaps girls’ education in general, are not high. His pre-conceived ideas about what to expect of an ‘English school-girl’ indicate that this is not the first time he has used the accomplishments as criteria for his judgement; it is probable that his experience is derived from social gatherings by observing the talent of women such as Blanche Ingram, which attests to the perceived social merits of such skills.

He follows his request with another — to survey Jane’s drawings: “Adèle showed me some sketches this morning, which she said were yours. I don’t know whether they were entirely of your doing: probably a master aided you?” (124). This comment insults Jane more than his condescending response to her piano-playing, seemingly because she channelled more of herself into them in her hours of solitude. Her cry of “[n]o indeed!” in response to his assumption reveals more passion than her answers to his prior questions, which are more transactional and respectful of propriety. (124) He assumes authority through the claim that he “can verify patchwork”, thereby asserting his perceived intellectual superiority. (124) It is the dichotomy of ‘originality’ versus ‘patchwork’ that he employs simultaneously to scrutinise Jane’s character. The pictures Jane produces appear to be inspired in part by the images she studied in *Bewick’s History of British Birds*, combined with darker, gothic elements from her own imagination, perhaps derived from novels or

Bessie's story-telling: 'The first represented clouds low and livid, rolling over a swollen sea [...]. Sinking below the bird and mast, a drowned corpse glanced through the green water'. (125) Inge-Stina Ewbank describes the drawings as 'half-allegorically developed situations', which seems apt as they are difficult to visualise, replicate or attribute neatly to the environments or situations which Jane has previously inhabited, though critics have tried to do so. (1966: 183)

Ian M. Emberson, for example, asserts that Milton was a primary influence in Brontë's construction of Jane's pictures. He argues that the cormorant in the fourth chapter of *Paradise Lost* inspired the cormorant in Jane's first picture, interpreting the bird taking the bracelet from the corpse as a foreshadowing of Jane's aborted marriage to Rochester. He also describes how this first picture resembles a Bewick image which Charlotte Brontë had copied herself in her youth. (see 1998: 66-70) Despite this seeming a fairly plausible interpretation in essence, Emberson's interpretation of the other pictures, the third in particular, is more tenuous. He traces the quotations, 'The likeness of a Kingly Crown' and 'the shape which shape had none', to the section of *Paradise Lost* in which Satan approaches the gates of hell and finds them guarded by two deadly monsters — Sin and Death. He argues that this is Brontë's foreshadowing of the future choice Jane must make between Rochester and her morality: 'she can go with Rochester to the Continent as his mistress, thus satisfying both his and her longing for sexual love [...]; or she can flee from Thornfield thereby leaving her moral and religious conscience relatively clear, but condemning herself to much suffering'. (1998: 72-3) This interpretation, however, appears to ignore significant details of the painting such as the iceberg, the veiled face supported by hands, and the 'ring of white flame' above the head. (Brontë 2000: 126) Given the elusive nature and intricate ghostly details of each painting, the inclination is to agree with Hermione

Lee's argument that though the pictures 'are presented as though they can be 'read'', there are too many intangible elements which make it almost impossible to offer steadfast interpretations of each. (1981: 242) The paintings 'suggest Jane's inner solitude, her acute consciousness of death, [...] her restlessness, her bitter, ironic sense of life's horror', but how they relate to the narrative itself is 'mysterious and hazy'. (242) They do not reflect precise events in Jane's life, but instead the relationship between her imagination and reality which the reader has already glimpsed in the red-room episode and will encounter again in the dreams she has later in the novel.

Rochester, while clearly impressed with Jane's paintings, understates his reaction, deeming that they are, "'for a school girl, peculiar'". (2000: 126) Jane, notwithstanding her frustration towards the "'contrast between [her] idea and [her] handiwork'", admits that, "'[t]o paint them, in short, was to enjoy one of the keenest pleasures I have ever known'". (126) Her satisfaction is derived from the execution of the activity itself as a means of achieving peace and self-expression, regardless of the result, which she recognises is flawed: "'in each case I had imagined something which I was quite powerless to realize'". (126) Despite the talent and imagination she displays, she is not left satisfied with her work, revealing none of the 'orgueil' to which educators such as Campan objected. Her pursuits are motivated by inner creativity and the desire for personal development as opposed to performance for social appreciation, which distinguishes her motives from those of Blanche Ingram. Brontë presents the beneficial effects of the 'accomplishments' if they are practised for purposes of personal enjoyment; in Jane's case they signify depth, creativity and an artistic imagination which spark Rochester's attraction to her without her having used them for their social functions.

Rochester's assessment of Jane is not the only occasion on which Jane is judged by her 'accomplishments'. When Bessie visits Jane at Lowood, she is, at first, disappointed by Jane's lack of beauty, which she esteems a pre-requisite of an 'accomplished lady': "you are genteel enough; you look like a lady, and it is as much as I ever expected of you: you were no beauty as a child". (91) Bessie associates beauty with class, attainment, education and, essentially, female worth. As Jane does not fulfil this criterion, Bessie is surprised when the extent of Jane's talents is revealed. Her piano-playing ability, 'charm[s]' Bessie and, when questioned as to whether she can draw, Jane is able to gesture to her work on display, leaving her companion awestruck: "It is as fine a picture as any Miss Reed's drawing-master could paint, let alone the young ladies themselves who could not come near it". (92) The final revelation that Jane also speaks French leads Bessie to conclude: "you are quite a lady, Miss Jane!" (92) This reflects the association of the accomplishments with class status; Jane rises in Bessie's estimation when it is revealed that she is in possession of the talents one would expect of the privileged classes. To Bessie, the acquisition of skills which reflect class ascension are the ultimate merits of Jane's education. While Jane does not cultivate her talents for show, in a short time she convinces Bessie that her lack of beauty has not held her back; conversely, she has made more progress than her more fortunate, privileged and, in the case of Georgiana, attractive cousins. As Jen Cawallader notes, through her skills, Jane proves her marketable potential to Bessie: 'Bessie [now] considers Jane in the light of a professional, like the drawing-master, rather than seeing Jane's accomplishments as the smatterings of learning the ideal upper-class woman would possess to enhance her beauty and amuse her husband'. (2009: 242) It is clear that Bessie judges Jane against the standards that society dictates for an 'accomplished lady', and perhaps still values

decorative attributes which promise to increase a lady's matrimonial fortune; however, the proof of Jane's skills encourages her to challenge her prejudice and acknowledge their potential for practical application in a professional context.

Brontë also uses the association between the accomplishments and judgement to map the development of Jane's personal judgement of others in relation to her feelings about herself. This is made most explicit through Jane's perception of Blanche Ingram whom Mrs Fairfax describes as universally admired "not only for her beauty, but for her accomplishments". (2000: 159) Jane's jealousy is ignited by details of Blanche's singing performance, which Rochester apparently assessed as "remarkably good". (160) In her eagerness to cast Blanche as foe, Jane is forced to acknowledge that her feelings towards Rochester have advanced further than those one would expect of a governess towards her master. In recognition of the fact that '[i]t does good to no woman to be flattered by her superior, who cannot possibly intend to marry her', she resolves to paint portraits of herself and Blanche to represent their respective stations in life, in order to remind herself of her humble position as 'a dependent and a novice'. (160-161) She does this in the hope that the exercise will clarify her judgement and separate passion from reason so that she can make peace with the likely outcome that Rochester's designs are on Blanche, the beautiful, talented and refined lady. To make the difference in their stations explicit, Jane names her self-portrait 'Portrait of a Governess, disconnected, poor, and plain', but describes Blanche's as 'an accomplished lady of rank'. (161)

While this may seem self-deprecating on Jane's part, particularly as the reader has a vested interest in Jane's success thanks to the first-person narrative, the exercise in fact proves doubly beneficial to her. In the short-term, she is able to distract her impassioned mind by expressing herself through drawing, but in the

longer-term, the result of this drawing is that she is able to regulate her feelings: 'Ere long I had reason to congratulate myself on the course of wholesome discipline to which I had thus forced my feelings to submit: thanks to it, I was able to meet subsequent occurrences with a decent calm'. (162) Albeit that on the surface this exercise seems like a form of self-torture for Jane, her ability to draw soothes her anxiety and thus proves personally profitable to her. Though she actually possesses many of the same skills as Blanche, drawing their pictures in parallel reminds her to be content in her own situation. Brontë shows that Jane is able to use her skill for therapeutic purposes: expressing herself through this channel, she is able to work through psychological conflict without external support. It offers her a means to progress, overcome obstacles and quell her passion so that she can regain contentment in a situation over which she has no influence. This provides another example of the benefits of creativity when it is not being used for exhibition; as an emotional outlet, drawing allows Jane to reclaim inner peace.

When Jane is exposed to Blanche Ingram in person, the distance that her portraits have enabled her to establish allows her the space to form a critical judgement of Blanche's character without it being tainted by her personal feelings. In her description of Blanche, she duly lists her accomplishments, but she is not overwhelmed by them; she is, in fact, better placed to identify her flaws. Whilst Blanche's social superiority is reflected in the quality with which she executes her piano-playing, singing and French, which she speaks 'with fluency and with a good accent', it becomes clear to Jane that Blanche weaponises these skills to justify treating others with disrespect: 'I presently perceived she was (what is vernacularly termed) *trailing* Mrs Dent; her trail might be clever, but it was decidedly not good natured'. (173) To return to Sandford's argument that

'accomplishments' should be 'the ornament of a cultivated mind', Brontë demonstrates that they must also be subsidiary to a good nature which Blanche cannot boast, treating even Adèle with 'spiteful antipathy'. (186) After making Blanche's acquaintance, Jane's jealousy dissipates in spite of the conventional excellence of Blanche's accomplishments, estimating her to be 'too inferior to excite the feeling'. (185) Brontë casts Blanche as the antithesis of Jane; she is the embodiment of all the undesirable outcomes of having been brought up according to one's class. Blanche's character can be identified in Sandford's warnings against performance of the accomplishments for egotistical reasons:

Accomplishments may be cultivated from vanity, or from the desire of exciting the admiration of the other sex. Where either of these is the stimulus, the pursuit of accomplishment often becomes immoderate and its attainment is accompanied with much that is displeasing in the character, and unprepossessing in the outward deportment. (1836: 36-37)

No matter how impressive her beauty and talent, Blanche's accomplishments cannot mask her true nature; she performs and postures to capture Rochester's attention and dismisses those she deems inferior, proving the validity of Sandford's caution. Jane perceives that it is precisely this insincerity which causes Blanche's '[a]rrows [to] continually glance[] off from Mr. Rochester's breast and f[a]ll harmless at his feet'. (2000: 186-187)

In addition to the questionable motives behind Blanche's accomplishments, Jane also notes the lack of genuine interest and creativity in her skills and comportment:

She was very showy, but she was not genuine: she had a fine person, many brilliant attainments; but her mind was poor, her heart barren by nature: nothing bloomed spontaneously on that soil; no unforced natural fruit delighted by its freshness. She was not good; she was not original: she used to repeat sounding phrases from books; she never offered, nor had an opinion of her own. She advocated a high tone of sentiment; but she did not know the sensations of sympathy and pity: tenderness and truth were not in her. (2000: 185-186)

Although superficially Blanche adheres to Bessie's stereotypical appreciation of an 'accomplished lady', her motives undermine her talent. The introspection Jane gains from drawing the portraits is the very thing that Blanche lacks: though she is self-conscious, she is not self-critical and everything is done for outward effect. (172) In Blanche's quest for external admiration, she neglects the cultivation of internal perspective, understanding and humility, which is the point at which she fails and Jane advances, not least in the eyes of Rochester.

Brontë demonstrates the potentially marketable qualities of accomplishments through Jane's acquisition of French, which is instrumental in her employment. According to Thormählen, for a woman in Jane's position, 'French was a necessity. No prospective governess would be taken on without it'. (Thormählen 2007: 111) It is for this very reason that she is selected for the Thornfield post, meaning that she can converse with Adèle in the child's mother tongue. Brontë proves Jane's command of the language early in the novel through the narrative voice. When describing her reaction to having been sentenced to the red-room, Jane writes: 'I was a trifle beside myself; or rather *out* of myself, as the French would say'. (2000: 12) The autobiography allows Brontë to allude to Jane's command of the language

to evidence the success of her *Bildung* and her eventual triumph over circumstance. On meeting Adèle for the first time, Jane's confidence in the language enables comfortable conversation with her French charge:

Fortunately I had had the advantage of being taught French by a French lady; and as I had always made a point of conversing with Madame Pierrot, as often as I could, and had, besides, during the last seven years, learnt a portion of French by heart daily — applying myself to take pains with my accent, and imitating as closely as possible the pronunciation of my teacher — I had acquired a certain degree of readiness and correctness in the language, and was not likely to be much at a loss with Mademoiselle Adela.
(101)

This passage confirms that Jane was instructed by a native teacher at Lowood, but nevertheless, reflects her self-discipline and commitment to deepen her understanding beyond a mere superficial grasp. Her objectives are fluency and accuracy as opposed to performance, which result in a mastery of the language on which she can later foster her independence. The ease with which she speaks comforts Adèle, proving her suitability for the post. Soon, Adèle begins 'chattering fluently', crying in French: "you speak my language as well as Mr. Rochester does". (101) In likening Jane's abilities to those of Rochester, a man of the upper-classes who has presumably been exposed to an education that accords to his gender and rank, Adèle suggests the significance of Jane's achievement. Jane has never travelled as Rochester has, nor has she had access to his extensive library or financial support; her attainments and abilities are rendered all the more

impressive for their having been achieved in comparative economic and cultural poverty.

Similarly, Hardy presents Sue Bridehead as a woman who would be able to support herself on her skills alone without the input she receives from Jude and Phillotson. While her accomplishments are not referred to as directly as Jane's or Blanche's and Hardy makes clear that Sue's principal skills pertain to critical analysis and intellectual argument, through his references to her aptitude for mathematical drawing and artistry he suggests that Sue could be successful in almost any field she applies herself to.

Before she meets Jude, Sue is employed in a Christian bookshop as a designer working with metal, a specialised craft posing a marked contrast to the usual embroidery or sewing with which women were typically expected to occupy themselves. Having researched her background, Jude learns that Sue's father left her to support herself on this trade which, he observes, requires precision and expertise: 'Before her lay a piece of zinc, cut to the shape of a scroll of three or four feet long, and coated with a dead-surface paint on one side. Hereon, she was designing or illuminating, in characters of Church text'. (2016: 74-75) Watching her work, Jude concludes: 'her skill in work of this sort [had] no doubt been acquired from her father's occupation as an ecclesiastical worker in metal'. (75) This specialism has clearly not been learned at school, but more likely from her father's trade, a typically masculine pursuit, but one in which Sue demonstrates proficiency. Importantly, it allows her to transgress female stereotypes and make a living on which she can support herself in her father's absence; Sue capitalises on this skill to obtain independence as Jane does with her language ability. This scene does not, however, lack Hardy's irony. Surmising that Sue is involved in "[a] sweet, saintly, Christian business", Jude makes a judgement on her character

based on her environment and subject matter. Hardy contradicts this impression only a few pages later through Sue's purchase of Venus and Apollo, revealing her true religious uncertainty and inclination to paganism.

Hardy references Sue's artistic talents throughout the novel, conveying the versatility of her skills. Having visited an exhibition displaying an artist's model of Jerusalem, she is able to recreate it in sketch despite the underwhelming effect it has on her. She analyses the piece as an 'elaborate', but 'very imaginary production', in a demonstration of her critical skills, but impresses upon Phillotson that it was not a piece worthy of extended attention or merit. (90) The next day, Phillotson finds on Sue's blackboard, 'skilfully drawn in chalk, a perspective view of Jerusalem with every building shown in its place', though she had hardly looked at it. (91) Drawing and mathematical accuracy come naturally to Sue, which suggests that she might have embarked on a career as an architect, like Hardy himself, if the path were open to her. The singularity of this talent is emphasised through Phillotson's surprise at her rendition; not only can he not execute such work himself, but he cannot provide instruction in this field, as he presumes he can in teaching. This is a display of Sue's mastery which cannot be refuted by Sue's male companion. This gives further weight to the impression that Sue's artistic skills are of an advanced level which would facilitate a career; it is important to note that she had been "getting on as an art designer" perfectly well before Jude interferes, persuading her to revert to teaching. (87)

Unlike Jane, who is content in practice but always striving to improve on her talents, Sue is generally portrayed as confident in her abilities and satisfied with the outcome of her work. During her period of concubinage with Jude, she elects to help him in his rendering of the Ten Commandments in a local church:

she began painting in the letters of the first Table while he set about mending a portion of the second. She was quite pleased at her powers; she had acquired them in the days she painted illuminated texts for the church-fitting shop at Christminster. (244)

It seems that part of Sue's satisfaction in this scene stems from the fact that her skills give her the opportunity to contribute to a project in a period of her life in which she is otherwise unemployed apart from her care of Old Father Time. Furthermore, her participation in this piece reflects the transferable nature of her skills and their possible application to numerous other works. Her satisfaction in her efforts and her ability to effectively pick up where she left off previously further suggest that she would have experienced similar contentment had she followed the career as an art designer that she had originally envisaged for herself. Initially, Hardy paints the conviviality that Sue and Jude enjoy in this employment as idyllic: 'Nobody seemed likely to disturb them; and the pleasant twitter of birds, and the rustle of October leafage, came in through an open window and mingled with their talk'. (244) The wholesome quality of their union in life and work is highlighted by nature's apparent support of this endeavour, but their peace is soon disturbed by two women who enter the church and take umbrage at the sight of the pair painting together: "A strange pair to be painting the Two Tables! I wonder Biles and Willis could think of such a thing as hiring those!" (245) Sue and Jude's reputation as an unmarried couple precedes them, giving members of the public ammunition to judge them and their suitability for certain environments.

Although this judgement is not based on Sue's accomplishments *per se*, using her skill on this public platform nevertheless leaves her vulnerable to society's prejudices. When she becomes aware that Jude's dismissal has been

brought about by gossip and social assumptions, the joy and peace she had enjoyed in her work are spoiled: “I can’t *bear* that they, and everybody, should think people wicked because they may have chosen to live their own way! It really is these opinions that make the best intentioned people reckless, and actually become immoral!” (246) Hardy’s juxtaposition of their happy, undisturbed work and its abrupt disruption suggests his support of Sue; the lifestyle Sue leads leaves her vulnerable to social prejudice which limits her ability to practise her skills in a public space. The church environment converts the personal pleasure Sue derives from art into a public performance which invites claims of obscenity. Both Brontë and Hardy show that their heroines are capable of supporting themselves on their accomplishments; the arts they practise are motivated by neither showiness nor superficiality, but by genuine interest and inherent aptitude. Though Jane is assessed on her accomplishments, the resulting judgement formed by other characters is positive, whereas Sue finds that judgement on her skills or character is dictated by the personal choices she makes. However impressive her work, it will always be undermined by her refusal to obey convention.

3.2 Valentine, Emma Bovary and the Perils of Performance

In the French novels, the accomplishments are not presented as skills on which women can base their independence, nor as beneficial to self-cultivation. Instead, Flaubert and Sand present them as superficial emblems of class status, entailing performance and the possibility of sexual indiscretion. The opening conversation between Louise and Bénédict in *Valentine* addresses wealth and the desire to be observed as motives behind the pursuit of the accomplishments. Having been educated beyond the status of agricultural worker himself, Bénédict is disgusted

by the way in which the Lhérys make a spectacle of their daughter to reflect their newly acquired wealth. He deems it vulgar for a woman of Athénaïs's stock, 'si bien faite pour traire les vaches et garder les moutons' to feel 'dégradée' at the thought of turning her hand to any occupation with practical applications: 'elle craindrait de redescendre à l'état d'où elle est sortie si elle savait faire un ouvrage utile'. (4) Instead, her education teaches her the decorative arts with which to emulate the superficiality of the upper classes: 'elle sait broder, jouer de la guitare, peindre des fleurs, danser'. (4) Although his criticism entails a certain hypocrisy, having obtained a university education by virtue of his family's wealth, it underlines the vanity that motivates the fashions and behaviours of the bourgeoisie in a society that values status over intellectual, creative or practically useful endeavour. From this scene, combined with Valentine's speech on the poor state of education for women, it can be inferred that Sand, in essence, supports the criticisms articulated by Bénédict, however, she tempers the disdain that he aims at Athénaïs personally through Louise's response to his chastising remarks: 'Est-ce la faute d'Athénaïs si on l'a élevée ainsi? [...] Souvenez-vous donc combien son coeur est bon et sensible...'. (4) It is superficiality that fuels Bénédict's loathing and yet, ironically, he is only willing to judge Athénaïs superficially, unable to see her kind heart and good intentions through the prejudice brought about by his education. The vehemence of his attack can perhaps be attributed to the shame he feels to be associated with the trivialities of his class, but it also demonstrates the force of social judgement directed at women and the way in which society can exploit a woman's accomplishments to execute a character assassination.

Valentine's speech berating the state of female education also features criticism of the social judgement that the accomplishments facilitate. She reveals to Bénédict that she has 'le goût et l'instinct' for music, yet her formal education

and the ensuing expectations of social performance were not conducive to her cultivating her aptitude in the subject: 'On m'a appris cela comme on m'a tout appris, [...] c'est-à-dire superficiellement'. (13) Having had the importance of appearance impressed on her by her mother, who is concerned that Valentine's behaviour should reflect their class at all times, Valentine is dissuaded from pursuing an activity that might expose her to further judgement or display: 'Comme profession, la musique ne m'eût pas convenu; elle met une femme trop en évidence; elle la pousse sur le théâtre ou dans les salons; elle en fait une actrice ou une subalterne'. (13) In order to exempt herself from the limelight, she sets aside her passion for music in favour of painting, which awards her a greater degree of liberty and an excuse to isolate herself from her family: 'La peinture donne plus de liberté; elle permet une existence plus retirée, et les jouissances qu'elle procure doublent le prix dans la solitude'. (13) According to Thormählen, the concern as to the election of particular accomplishments also existed in England. Painting was considered a more 'serious' pursuit than musical activities because '[i]t was less associated with the courtship-related activities whose ultimate purpose was to captivate, and it did not afford such obvious opportunities to shine in company'. (2007:107) From her objections to the theatrical dimension of music, it can be concluded that Valentine's attitude towards the practice of accomplishments is similar to Jane's: she requires a means of self-expression in which she can engage to combat *ennui* without external interference or ensuing responsibilities. Paradoxically, however, self-expression is only possible on suppression of her true preferences and passions.

Valentine's attitude also indicates a desire to be able to support herself on her skills as Jane and Sue are able to. Her strategy is to concentrate her efforts on a speciality that can be perfected to a level of mastery, as opposed to an array of

marginally developed 'talents'. Although she believes she is happily engaged to Lansac at this point, she prepares the groundwork for the eventuality that she may need to fund her independence: 'j'ai supprimé de mes talents ceux qui ne pouvaient me servir à rien. Je me suis adonnée à un seul, parce que j'ai remarqué que, quels que soient les temps et les modes, une personne qui fait très bien une chose se soutient toujours dans la société'. (13) For a woman in Valentine's position, this is a pertinent consideration as she has no other surviving male relatives on whom she can depend should her relationship with Lansac not mature as expected. This said, her good sense, judgement and ability to implement strategy in this scenario indicate that Valentine would be capable of supporting herself independently irrespective of men. She deplores the fact that women's education perpetuates female dependence by providing them with only shallow instruction, allowing them to 'rien approfondir': 'nous qui faisons des peintures en laque, des écrans à l'aquarelle, des fleurs en velours, et vingt autres futilités ruineuses [...] que ferions-nous? [...] Je ne sache qu'un état qui leur convienne, c'est d'être femme de chambre'. (13) The tone of this speech is scathing towards a society that insists on creating dependent, skill-less women whose remit extends only to rendering a household pleasant and a husband happy. The utilitarian provision of accomplishments within formal education incarcerates women within their sphere, whereas one skill mastered profoundly could truly constitute survival by opening career opportunities. Sand makes Valentine the spokesperson for women's liberation on a broader scale: her repeated use of the first-person plural and the rhetorical question, 'que ferions-nous?', encourage the reader to recognise that society is structured to ensure women's vulnerability, ignorance and ineptitude in order to control them. Innocuous as Valentine's drawing may appear, her intention is to monetise it to seize autonomy and subvert the established order.

The suspect morality associated with the accomplishments is addressed in both French texts where piano-playing is used to conceal amorous or sexual transgression. Valentine uses the piano as a means of justifying Bénédict's presence in her house to her mother, claiming that the purpose of his visit is to tune the instrument and thus, provide a service. This is another instance in which Sand presents the accomplishments as inextricable from their class associations. Valentine's grandmother is unsure how to treat the 'neveu de son fermier', but, persuaded that he possesses musical talents of a higher quality than one might expect from an agricultural worker, she requests that he sing 'un petit air villageois' to give her some respite from Rossini. (21) Despite his talent, she cannot dissociate Bénédict from the stereotypes of his rank and casts her expectations and prejudices accordingly. In an attempt to mask her grandmother's insinuations, Valentine offers to accompany him on the piano, creating the scene which raises her mother's suspicions of courtship. In order to disguise his having brought news of the banished Louise, as well as her developing admiration for Bénédict, Valentine provides the following excuse: 'Mon piano est horriblement faux, vous le savez; [...] ce *jeune homme* est musicien; en outre, il accorde très bien les instruments... Je savais cela par Athénaïs qui a un piano chez elle'. (22) This admission shifts the comtesse's suspicions from sexual transgression to class transgression: 'Athénaïs a un piano! ce jeune homme est musicien! Quelle étrange histoire me faites-vous là?' (22) She is shocked at the revelation that members of the previously poor farming community can now afford to instruct their children in the same 'accomplishments' valued by members of her own class, which she sees as an encroachment on the privileges she enjoys. In response to the comtesse's incredulity, the marquise adds that this is not an exceptional event in modern times: 'à présent tout le monde en France reçoit de l'éducation! Ces gens-là sont

riches; ils ont fait donner des talents à leurs enfants'. (22) This cements the idea that talents are associated with wealth and access to objects of value such as pianos and guitars. Although the marquise reveals her class prejudice on a number of occasions, she appears more willing to accept the narrowing of the divide between the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy, perhaps because she was born into wealth and status and therefore has less to prove than her daughter-in-law, who ranks lower by birth. The comtesse's reluctant acceptance of Bénédict's skill provides a further excuse for his return, facilitating the mixing of both sexes and classes in a situation which would otherwise be deemed inappropriate. The acquisition of a common skill, such as piano-playing or singing, allows for barriers to be broken and unconventional relationships to flourish. This concept will be examined further in Chapter Five.

Emma Bovary uses piano-playing similarly to provide her with an excuse to travel to Rouen to conduct her affair with Léon. To Charles, she claims a newfound zest for music which is tainted by her loss of aptitude for her "pauvre piano!" (2001: 344) She manipulates him to conclude that 'elle avait un peu perdu' in the knowledge that he would do anything to assuage her bouts of illness and depression. (344) Homais is also instrumental in this persuasion. On learning that Charles cannot afford Emma's lessons, he uses Rousseau's arguments to convince him that the expense will be an investment in his child's future, allowing her to learn the skills of the wealthy without additional cost. Casting himself as an authority on such matters, Homais advises: 'en engageant Madame à étudier vous économisez pour plus tard sur l'éducation musicale de votre enfant!' (345) He adds that while Rousseau's idea is "peut-être un peu neuve encore, [...] [elle] finira par triompher, j'en suis sûr, comme l'allaitement maternel et la vaccination". (345) Charles cannot refute this expertise and so consents to funding Emma's

lessons under the assumption that it is the best interests of his family to do so. Little does he realise that this decision in fact facilitates an act which, ironically, contributes to his family's downfall; by paying for these lessons, he unwittingly enables Emma to neglect her roles as wife and mother and provides an opportunity for further expenditure that contributes to her debt. Finding 'au bout d'un mois, qu'elle avait fait des progrès considérables', Emma's manipulation of Charles is rendered more evident — not only did she pretend frustration at her dwindling talent to bend Charles to her will, but she had never lost her ability in the first place. (345)

Flaubert attributes a sexual association to all the accomplishments that Emma displays. At the beginning of the novel, her 'talents' contribute to the allure which renders Charles helpless. During his first visit to the Bovary household, he finds her sewing bandages: 'tout en cousant, elle se piquait les doigts, qu'elle portait ensuite à sa bouche pour les sucer'. (61-62) This line invites two possible interpretations: first, it could be argued that Emma's inability to sew without pricking her fingers indicates that her aptitude falls below the standards that are expected from a prospective wife and mother. In this sense, it is a signal that she will be unsuited to the responsibilities these roles entail, as soon becomes clear to the reader. Second, her tendency to suck her fingers adds a sexual dimension to her task. While she is presented as inept in this specifically female pursuit, her sexual appeal overrides her shortcomings, and her mistakes draw Charles's attention to the physicality of her hands and the beauty of her eyes.

Even her decision to learn Italian is associated with a failed opportunity to commit a sexual transgression with Léon. On his departure from Yonville, Emma attempts various activities fleetingly to distract herself from her deepening ennui: 'Elle voulut apprendre l'italien: elle acheta des dictionnaires, une grammaire, une

provision de papier blanc'. (188) Flaubert associates this decision with her increasingly extravagant spending habits and the onset of a more profound depression, causing her to act capriciously on her whims. This sudden interest is complemented by an equally abrupt decision to embark on 'des lectures sérieuses, de l'histoire et de la philosophie'. (188) However, her interest in such pursuits dissipates as swiftly as it arrives: 'il en était de ses lectures comme de ses tapisseries, qui, toutes commencées encombraient son armoire; elle les prenait, les quittait, passait à d'autres'. (189) She buys the resources with which to develop her skills, but lacks the mental stability and determination to commit to the serious study undertaken by Jane and Sue. Her objective is not to increase her marketable skills, but to possess the tropes of the learned in order to test out the identity of the scholar. The inference is that this study does not contribute to Emma's development, but provides an insight into the deterioration of her mental state — a cry for help which goes unnoticed by Charles.

Flaubert does not use the accomplishments to draw out Emma's natural talent as Brontë and Hardy do with Jane and Sue's skills. On the contrary, she does little with any skills she accrues, suggesting their mediocrity, perhaps as a result of the negligence of her convent education, her natural ability, or the lack of effort she is willing to devote to their development. Nevertheless, however minimal Emma's recommendations are, Flaubert ensures that Charles has even less in his favour, rendering him an uninteresting and unimpressive companion. After their marriage, Flaubert juxtaposes Emma's 'accomplishments' to Charles's lack thereof, emphasising the stark contrast between their abilities and temperaments. Charles's conversation is 'plate', living day to day 'ne savant rien, ne souhaitant rien', but he regards Emma's 'accomplishments' with awe and admiration: 'Elle dessinait quelquefois; et c'était pour Charles un grand amusement que de rester

là, tout debout à la regarder penchée sur son carton [...] Quant au piano, plus les doigts y couraient vite, plus il s'émerveillait'. (92) Playing with 'aplomb', if not professionalism, Flaubert demonstrates that Emma has the ability to occupy herself with these skills, whereas Charles does not. They have no point of common interest on which to base their conversation and amusement unlike Jane and Rochester, Sue and Jude, or indeed Valentine and Bénédict. Charles's lack of talent relegates him to a position of passive observation, meaning that an aspect of performance is implicit in all Emma's pursuits. For Emma, however, the novelty of this performance is temporary; the diametrically opposing roles as spectator and performer reflect the difference in their ambitions, highlighting the futility of their relationship from the outset.

Despite Emma's irritation at Charles's unfaltering admiration, Flaubert shows that her pursuit of accomplishments only lasts as long as she has the prospect of an audience. After marrying Charles, Emma is deeply bored in her situation, leaving her longing for 'un événement'. (116) Through Emma's restlessness in marriage, Flaubert accentuates the frustration of the circumstances that Emma now must bear. While Charles has the luxury of leaving the house for work every day, Emma remains inside with no routine, dreaming that the Bovary name might be 'illustre' if it weren't for the fact that, 'Charles n'avait point d'ambition!' (116) Emma's stagnation and disillusionment with the world is such that she relinquishes any recreational activities she used to practise: 'Elle abandonna la musique. Pourquoi jouer? qui l'entendait? [...] Elle laissa dans l'armoire ses cartons à dessin et la tapisserie. À quoi bon? à quoi bon? La couture l'irritait'. (117-118) To Emma, these activities serve no purpose in the absence of onlookers. Charles admires her at her work, but months into their marriage, Emma is no longer concerned with pleasing him; having already married him, there is no further gain

to be made from making a special effort to impress him, enamoured by her as he already is. In Emma's case, the motivation behind practice of the accomplishments is performative: she seeks admiration through the observation which conversely detracts from the pleasure the other protagonists take in their respective activities. On realisation that marriage condemns her to the appreciation of a single, somewhat dull man, she sees no further reason to expend her energies on pursuits from which she derives no other benefit.

To conclude, Brontë and Hardy present Jane and Sue's accomplishments as skills on which they are able to base their independence. Although judgement is implicit in the execution of these skills, the advantages of being able to speak a foreign language or produce mathematically accurate drawings outweigh the hurtful assessments made by others, as they offer the women the opportunity to foster an existence without committing themselves to marriage. Neither Jane nor Sue pursue their talents to be observed, and in Sue's case, this hinders the joy she takes in her work, preventing her from taking further opportunities to pursue it. For Jane in particular, drawing allows an outlet for her creativity and a means through which she is able to improve her mind and hone her passionate temperament, enabling her to overcome external obstacles and maintain inner equilibrium.

While 'accomplishments' are depicted in a more questionable light in the French novels, like Jane, Valentine takes solace in the freedom that drawing allows her, giving her an excuse to occupy herself away from the watchful gaze of her mother and grandmother. Sand suggests that poor, shallow teaching of the accomplishments is representative of the agenda behind girls' education: no skill is taught thoroughly enough to be of any practical use, rendering women helpless when they are left without the provisions of wealth that they are taught to expect.

In both French texts, the association of the accomplishments to class and performance is prevalent. The prospect of social judgement dictates the skills that Valentine chooses to pursue, trading her love of music for art in order to avoid the theatrical aspect of musical performance. Conversely, Emma Bovary relinquishes music, along with other recreational activities, after her marriage; in the absence of a worthy audience, she no longer has any use for them, reflecting that her purposes were never to satisfy intellectual or creative instincts. In her adult life, music serves only as an excuse to see Léon, allowing her to play different roles from those prescribed to her in marriage; it is the theatrical element that she values most in this intimacy, which she enjoys but briefly before the relationship is engulfed by performance entirely. The French novels reflect the prevailing attitudes towards accomplishments as being the 'engine of social and class distinction' referred to by Arnold; they are superficial markers of wealth and female dependence, intended for decorative or ostentatious purposes only. The English novels, on the other hand, demonstrate mastery of skills as being the fruits of female intellectual curiosity. Viewed in this way, the accomplishments are markers of female talent, achievement and proof that women do not require men for survival.

Chapter Four: Socialisation and Support Networks: Parents, Guardians and Female Communities

The previous chapters have examined the ways in which the female characters have been shaped by education in some of its more explicit guises through formal schooling, the characters' personal endeavours in reading and their social accomplishments, but these are not the only aspects of education contributing to the overall formation of the individual. As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (1796) is broadly appreciated as being the archetype of the traditional *Bildungsroman*, marking the birth of the genre. One of the themes that propels Goethe's narrative, and indeed, Wilhelm's development, is his social interaction with other characters along his journey and the advice they offer him, solicited or otherwise. It is in this way that he learns to navigate the social sphere, developing towards his potential in a generally amicable environment.

While he does not act on all the advice he is given by those around him, the cacophony of opinions pulls him in different directions, confusing his instinctive ideas of right and wrong, how to act and react in various situations. After the death of his father, Wilhelm reflects on this:

He wrote down ideas and opinions of his own and of others [...] that interested him; but unfortunately he preserved much that was false alongside what was good [...] and, as a result, abandoned his own natural way of thinking and acting by following the lead of others. (Goethe 1989: 171)

The sheer number of different opinions and instances of advice-giving in Goethe's text encourage the reader to partake in the opinion that there is no 'correct' path for Wilhelm under these circumstances, other than that which coincides with his own wishes at the given stage in his life and development. Having noted that Wilhelm 'placed too much trust in the experience of others and attached too much value to what other people derived from their own convictions', the narrator comments on the counterproductive effects of attributing such importance to social opinion: 'Wilhelm, in striving to achieve unity within himself, was in fact steadily depriving himself of the possibility of any such regenerative achievement'. (171)

The diverse nature of opinions amongst individuals in *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* questions the concept of a homogenous society with a single ideology that the individual is to believe is unequivocally 'right' and, therefore, to be obeyed. Although this text is heralded as one of the prototypes of the *Bildungsroman* genre, throughout the text, Wilhelm's relationship with society appears more critical than cohesive, even at the point of the novel's conclusion. This demonstrates that the male protagonist is not obliged to conform to society to be accommodated by it, nor is conformity necessarily even possible. The presentation of society as diverse rather than monolithic in *Wilhelm Meister* has the effect of endorsing the sense of individuality which is celebrated by many artists and writers of the Romantic period.

It is noteworthy that the majority of the advice Wilhelm receives is given in a well-meaning spirit, even when others disapprove of the choices he makes. Though, by Wilhelm's own admission, he makes "one mistake after another", he is never severely morally reprimanded and is allowed to continue on his journey largely uninhibited, in spite of his sometimes morally dubious behaviour towards women and his dependants. (273) He pursues romantic relationships and even

proposes to a number of women, yet ends the narrative both unmarried and unchaste, even having fathered a son. As regards professional development, despite relinquishing his career in the theatre, he is nevertheless allowed the freedom to pursue it and explore his artistic ambition against the wishes of his business-minded father. At the end of the novel the reader is led to believe that Wilhelm's future will also hold further opportunities for development, rather than a restricted or domestic existence. Although he is still bombarded with advice from his peers, his horizons broaden, demonstrating community acceptance. He is presented with the opportunity to travel to America, implying that he will henceforth be at liberty to enjoy the experiences the world has to offer, aided by the support of hospitable friends and acquaintances.

It is clear that the engagement with other people's values and beliefs constitutes no small part of Wilhelm's education and thus, it is fitting that it should be discussed in relation to the female protagonists under study in this research. With this in mind, this chapter will address the subtler ways in which the female protagonists are educated in social expectations by parents, guardians and female companions. This allows for an exploration of the interplay between gender and class, paying particular attention to the way values are imparted, and at times enforced, especially in relation to marriage as the ultimate fulfilment of the female role. This discussion will also entail how these social mores are perceived by the protagonists themselves and the role they play in their emotional education.

These lines of enquiry are integral to an analysis of the socialisation process. Grit Höppner describes this phenomenon as 'the process of the individual development of a human personality within a social environment' in which 'individuals acquire language, knowledge, social skills, norms, values, and customs that are necessary for participating in and integrating into a group or

community'. (2017: 1) According to the *Encyclopedia of Infant and Child Development*, 'the standards, skills, motives, attitudes, and behaviors that are appropriate for a particular society and culture' are largely acquired through social channels such as 'families, peers, [...] schools, and religious institutions', which require interaction between an individual and wider social influences. (2008) This highlights the importance of social interaction within a definition of 'education' which posits *Bildung* at its core. This process highlights the relationship between the individual and broader socio-cultural structures, which often entails friction; as Höppner states, socialisation is also 'a combination of willed conformity and externally imposed rules, mediated by the expectations of other persons'. (2017: 1) Implicit in this statement is the assumption that conformity is not a natural impulse, suggesting that socialisation requires the exercise of control. This associates it with the utilitarian models of formal education, as it prioritises society's needs over those of the individual. In the case of the traditional *Bildungsroman* with a male protagonist, Franco Moretti describes happiness as being 'the subjective symptom of an objectively completed socialization'. (1987: 24) For the female protagonists under discussion, however, the process is often discordant, resulting in the increasing isolation and alienation of the character.

4.1 Parents, Guardians and Class

In *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Brontë's depiction of Mrs Reed's household functions as a microcosm of society, highlighting broader issues facing dependent females like Jane, but amplifying them through the eyes of an individual female child. Through the first-person narration, the reader is led to empathise with Jane, and subsequently to question the motives and hypocrisies exhibited by her aunt. From the outset, Brontë detaches Jane from the apparently happy middle-class family

unit by highlighting her social, physical and, with reference to John Reed, gender differences.

At the age of ten, Jane is already confronting the patriarchal possession of culture through John, who lays claim to the literature of the house despite not having any personal interest in it; as the male heir, he is of the view that “all the house belongs to [him]”. (Brontë 2000: 11) The gender distinction drawn here is evident, reflecting the restricted access to possession and culture as an obstacle facing women, particularly those with intellectual ambition, in the outside world. This said, an overt distinction between Jane and her female cousins is drawn within the first few pages of the novel. When the family is first mentioned, Jane’s perspective is immediately that of an outsider, an excluded party aware of her own subordinate station. While her three cousins ‘were now clustered around their mama in the drawing-room’, Jane looks on at this example of middle-class familial bliss, ‘humbled by the consciousness of [her] physical inferiority’. (7) In Brontë’s subsequent descriptions of Jane’s female cousins, it is evident that Jane does not hold the quality of temperament prized amongst the middle classes, nor the looks with which she might fulfil the expectations of the beauty and grace demanded by the feminine ideal: ‘Eliza, who was head-strong and selfish, was respected. Georgiana, who had a spoiled temper, a very acrid spite [...] was universally indulged. Her beauty [...] seemed to give delight to all who looked at her, and to purchase indemnity for every fault’. (15) It is important to note here that these children are a product of their environment, and indeed of Mrs Reed herself. The fact that their unpleasant characteristics remain unchallenged demonstrates indulgence on Mrs Reed’s behalf; she ensures they are aware of their privilege and, through lack of any substantial criticism, she allows them to assume the entitlement associated with their status, particularly in reference to their dealings

with Jane. In comparison to her cousins, Jane identifies herself as 'a heterogeneous thing, opposed to them in temperament, in capacity, in propensities; a useless thing, incapable of serving their interests or adding to their pleasure', dramatising both Jane's own painful self-awareness and Mrs Reed's compliance, and most likely encouragement, of her children's use and exclusion of the orphaned cousin. (15-16) Jane recognises herself as distinct from her family, but her self-deprecating language reflects a shame in the recognition of this difference; she is aware that if she were less candid about her individuality, shared the same values as the family or presented herself as a novel commodity for middle-class consumption with an inclination to please and entertain, she would likely find herself more warmly accommodated in the Reed household. It is her refusal to conform to this middle-class outlook which adds friction to the otherwise superficially idyllic image of hearth and home that Mrs Reed strives to maintain.

The hypocrisies in Mrs Reed's parenting are highlighted immediately by Jane as narrator in her use of parentheses when describing the family unit from which she is excluded: Mrs Reed 'lay reclined on a sofa by the fireside and with her darlings about her (for the time neither quarrelling nor crying) looked perfectly happy'. (7) The image Brontë creates here is reminiscent of a Victorian painting of the middle-class domestic idyl, but the illusion is undermined by Jane's comment on the fleeting nature of this contentment, revealing Brontë's satirical intent.

According to Mrs Reed, it is on the grounds that Jane does not share this contentment that she is excluded from the painting. By Mrs Reed's reasoning, until Jane can cultivate 'a more attractive and sprightly manner, [...] she really must exclude [her] from privileges intended only for contented, happy, little children', despite her allowing her own children to remain 'respected', 'indulged' and '[un]thwarted, much less punished' for their bad behaviour and defects of

character. (7, 15) At this early age, Jane has developed an awareness of the obstacles awaiting her as a female outcast who does not adhere to the prescribed social mould for one of her gender or her class, and does not strive to conform to what is desired of her by her peers or superiors.

One aspect of Jane's alienation is that she does not merely accept her aunt's branding her as an unpleasant intrusion upon her household. When instructed that she must be isolated for her discordant temperament, Jane questions: "What does Bessie say I have done?" (7) In response, Mrs Reed claims that it is on the basis of Jane's questioning her authority that she is obliged to exclude her from any familial joviality: "Jane, I don't like cavillers or questioners: besides, there is something truly forbidding in a child taking up her elders in that manner. Be seated somewhere; and until you can speak pleasantly, remain silent". (7) This not only indicates Jane's propensity to challenge the status quo, but Mrs Reed's to enforce it. It is Jane's sense of justice, as developed through her reading of history, that encourages her to question her punishment for simply existing in a manner contrary to that which Mrs Reed desires and expects of her. This exchange with Mrs Reed provides further insight into the difficulty Jane might face when released into a society that expects women, and particularly dependants, to behave deferentially to authority figures and to adhere unfalteringly to social custom to preserve the virtue and respectability which validates them in the eyes of that society. Rather than its being an abstract ideal, it is in Mrs Reed's interest to bring Jane up to accept her authority unquestioningly; if subservience is instilled from an early age it is likely that in adulthood she will become a citizen unquestioning of her station, thereby supporting the class hierarchy with which Mrs Reed identifies.

This might be classed as an example of what Annis Pratt describes as a process of "growing down" rather than "growing up". (Pratt 1981: 14) As Jane's

guardian, Mrs Reed would rather she retreat into deferential silence than develop her own voice and sense of self which would incur a challenge to Mrs Reed's will. From the subsequent scene in which Mrs Reed condemns Jane to the red-room, it is clear that she aims to dominate her entirely in order to render her a tractable and compliant charge. From Jane's point of view, her actions towards John, which are described by one of the servants as "a picture of passion", were merely in reaction to her having suffered a blow by his hand, causing her head to bleed. (11) Rather than give her a fair hearing, Mrs Reed neglects her physical injury, decreeing that she be locked in the red-room, thereby attacking her very existence through violence, neglect and incarceration. Jane riles against the looming trauma, but still Mrs Reed neglects her duty of care and instead uses the situation as an opportunity to educate Jane as to her position in the family, which is highlighted through use of the imperative: "you will now stay here an hour longer and it is only on condition of perfect submission and stillness that I shall liberate you then". (18) Mrs Reed becomes the literal key-holder of Jane's freedom, stifling both her movement and voice by way of exercising her power. This scene is pivotal to Brontë's characterisation of Mrs Reed and the way she leads the reader to react to her; Mrs Reed is authoritarian to the point of abuse even over trivial incidents, casting her as a petty and undesirable role model.

The servants both comply with this treatment from Jane's so-called 'benefactress', seemingly in agreement that Jane's situation justifies the severity to which she is subject. (12) Reprimanded by Abbot for her behaviour towards her "young master", Jane questions her standing in the hierarchy: "How is he my master? Am I a servant?" (12) In response, Abbot replies, "you are less than a servant, for you do nothing for your keep", thereby legitimising the punishment they exercise on account of what they deem as her "wickedness". (12) Once

again, Jane is threatened with physical restraint by members of her own sex: “If you don’t sit still you must be tied down [...]. Miss Abbot, lend me your garters”.

(12) Garters, as a widely recognised symbol of womanhood, twist traditionally patriarchal ideas about the position of women and prescribed roles within a class structure; this demonstrates the irony that such ideas can also be peddled by women. Although it could be argued that the servants are simply following the orders of their mistress here, their treatment of Jane seems too vindictive to reflect mere compliance. Based on the severity of their threats and their affirmation of Jane’s subordinate position, it can be inferred that the servants agree that Jane should be persecuted in this way. This is perhaps an expression of frustration towards their own social standing — an opportunity to dominate someone deemed lowlier than them within a household in which status is highly valued.

There is nothing about the actions of any of these three women in positions of responsibility that conforms to the feminine ideal of a nurturing mother figure. Rather, Mrs Reed’s matriarchy reinforces the patriarchal idea that Jane should grow up subordinate, resigned to her position in society. While Jane does not appear to be conscious that the obstacles opposing her are the products of patriarchy, Brontë conveys the idea that these views on women and class can be hypocritically supported by females who do not adhere to the ideals themselves. As Sarah E. Maier writes, the ‘child Jane is not only struggling against a patriarchal institution and society from which she is physically and mentally separated, but more frighteningly, against the repression of her individuality by the complicity of her own sex’. (Maier 2007: 321) The only person who appears to have any compassion for Jane in her orphaned state is Bessie who, despite the harsh treatment she proves she is capable of, remarks, “Jane is to be pitied too, Abbot”. (26) Abbot, however, bluntly admits that she harbours no such kindly or

benevolent feelings towards Jane, fundamentally due to her appearance: “if she were a nice, pretty child, one might compassionate her forlornness; but one really cannot care for such a little toad as that”. (26) Putting her pity aside, Bessie concedes to Abbot’s logic: “at any rate a beauty like Miss Georgiana would be more moving in the same condition”. (26) To Jane, who has never known any society outside the walls of the Reed household, this exchange provides further insight into the prejudice she is to face based on superficiality alone. Although she is aware of her moral superiority to Georgiana, this confirmation that appearance plays such a significant part in the servants’ attitude towards her substantiates the feeling of ‘physical inferiority’ that has grown inside Jane. (7)

Jane realises that her appearance falling short of others’ ideals could threaten her physical well-being. It is this discrimination that forces Jane to develop her own values rather than accept those forced upon her. Though her initial reaction to being thrown in the red-room is that of self-criticism, it later fuels her confidence to confront Mrs Reed for her injustice. Incarcerated for having defended herself, Jane as narrator offers an insight into her emotional state: ‘My habitual mood of humiliation, self-doubt, forlorn depression, fell damp on the embers of my decaying ire. All I said was wicked, and perhaps I might be so’. (16) The introspection brought about by this unwarranted approach to her behaviour almost convinces her that she is inherently at fault and that it is right that she be punished in this way. Her later exchanges with Mrs Reed, however, prove that Jane’s morality, as cultivated both by her reading and personal reflection, is stronger than the values that Mrs Reed and her servants impose on her. Overhearing Mrs Reed instructing John not to associate with her, for “she is not worthy of notice”, Jane responds: ‘suddenly and without at all deliberating on [her] words, “They are not fit to associate with me”’. (27) She concludes that although

the Reeds represent what she lacks in external status (wealth, family and beauty), real wealth, and therefore moral and social status, is derived from an internal sense of conscience, truth and justice. Aware that her interior values are superior to those of her indulged cousins, she feels the sting of Mrs Reed's hypocrisy when she speaks of Jane's 'tendency to deceit'. (33) Apart from the personal slight Jane feels, the erroneousness of the comment starkly opposes the morality she has cultivated for herself, obliging her vehement retaliation: "You think I have no feelings, and that I can do without one bit of love or kindness, but I cannot live so: and you have no pity. [...] People think you are a good woman, but you are bad; hard-hearted. You are deceitful". (36-7) The effect Brontë achieves by using Jane's morality to confront Mrs Reed's injustices is to persuade the reader to support Jane's rebellion against seemingly larger, better-established forces of authority, which she continues to do throughout the narrative.

Having developed a confidence in the theory of the morality she has established through her reading, Jane's loyalty to justice forces her to consider whether her own actions in this altercation abide by this morality. At first, she feels exalted by her victory as 'winner of the field', but after she has time to reflect on her outburst, her courage concedes to her prevailing conscience: 'A child cannot quarrel with its elders as I had done; cannot give its furious feelings uncontrolled play, as I had given mine'. (37) This consideration of propriety and feeling of regret demonstrate a multi-faceted thought process which leads her to question her own morals and behaviour against the social customs she has been taught by Mrs Reed and the servants regarding respecting one's elders and maintaining composure. Because Brontë leads the reader to question the universal application of these rules through her characterisation of Mrs Reed and the first-person narrative, which ensures that the injustices are felt just as Jane feels them, the

reader is encouraged to question the legitimacy of Mrs Reed's authority and to challenge such authority later in the novel. Nevertheless, Jane's fundamental desire to do what is right forces her to analyse her own behaviour. Her conscience does not denounce the basis of her argument, but it does impress upon her a sense of shame in the way in which it was conveyed: 'Something of vengeance I had tasted for the first time; as aromatic wine it seemed on swallowing warm and racy: its after-flavour, metallic and corroding, gave me a sensation as if I had been poisoned'. (38) Her morality remains in a state of evolution at this stage; she cannot accept the ways in which Mrs Reed persecutes her for relative docility whilst accepting the vanity and spite exhibited by her own children, yet her conscience forces her to interrogate her own attitude towards her aggressor to prevent herself from the temptation of vengeance and the possibility of assuming Mrs Reed's comportment herself. The reference to alcohol indicates Jane's awareness of the intoxicating and perhaps addictive qualities of revenge; her following thought process, however, realigns her path, steering her away from vice.

Mrs Reed provides Jane with examples of self-serving, class-oriented behaviour that Jane is certain that she does not want to imitate. Recognising in her domestic environment the tyranny she reads of in books such as *Goldsmith's History of Rome* strengthens Jane's natural inclinations towards justice, but this does not prevent her from reflecting on the validity of hierarchical customs on which her elders place importance. In retrospect, she is able to see that Mrs Reed's attitude towards her probably was intended to tame her passions. This was not a benevolent act, however, but a means of social control: 'I ought to forgive you, for you knew not what you did: while rending my heart-strings, you thought you were only up-rooting my bad propensities'. (20) This echo of Jesus' words in

Luke's gospel² reflects Jane's ability to empathise and forgive, raising her above the station of her aunt who never masters these qualities. It also attests to Jane's trajectory of development, posing a contrast to the anger she displays after Brocklehurst's visit, which illustrates the control of her temper through the exercise of conscience and reflection.

In spite of Mrs Reed's failures as a moral mentor, Jane is able to appreciate her successes as a widowed woman capable of managing a household without male support: 'illness never came near her; she was an exact, clever manager, her household and tenant were thoroughly under her control'. (35) Jane holds a certain regard for an independent woman who manages her estate and is able to function efficiently without a man to take care of business for her. While Mrs Reed only succeeds in Jane's moral education by providing her with the antithesis on which to model her morality, her dignified independence and the authority that she commands as a woman, for example, in conversation with Mr Brocklehurst, provide Jane with the example that women can embody these traditionally masculine characteristics, as well as violence, spite and vengeance.

Brontë further legitimises Jane's decision to reject the hypocrisy with which Mrs Reed conducts her guardianship through her portrayal of the damaging consequences of Mrs Reed's upbringing of her own children. When Bessie visits Jane at Lowood, she informs her that John and Georgiana's behaviour is threatening the reputation of the Reed family. On release into society, both brother and sister act in a manner consequent upon the indulgence of their upbringing as a result of their faults having been ignored. Having become 'a dissipated young man', John fails at university and is prevented from embarking upon a career. (91) John's habits unbalance the financial stability of the family, and Georgiana's

² Luke 23:34: Jesus forgives those who have sentenced his crucifixion: 'Father, forgive them for they know not what they do'.

attempt to elope pushes it towards disrepute. John as the heir and Georgiana as the beauty both have the advantages that Jane is taught are valued by society by the attitudes of Mrs Reed and the servants; however, the superficiality of these external qualities leads to moral degradation. Jane can boast neither conventional beauty, nor male property rights, and so does not grow up with the same sense of entitlement that ruins her cousins. The longevity of the internal qualities that Jane develops in comparison to those of her family members is emphasised when Bessie's husband, Robert, visits her to alert her to the Reeds' fall from grace. It emerges that John's hedonistic lifestyle precipitated his premature death. As in his childhood, he had avoided any serious or long-term punishment which may have righted his course: "he ruined his health and his estate [...] He got into debt and into jail: his mother helped him out twice, but as soon as he was free he returned to his old companions and habits. His head was not strong". (221) It is ironic that the decline in the Reed family fortune is occasioned by Mrs Reed's insistence upon bringing John up to demand the deserts of his status. Robert even cites "fear of poverty" as a catalyst for the decline in Mrs Reed's health before she suffers a stroke. (222) Brontë encourages the reader to see the potential corruption that can arise from placing too much importance on external status. This emphasises the value of Jane's moral and emotional development, which she cultivates irrespective of external admiration or concern for status symbols.

The outcomes for Jane's female cousins provide further testament to Mrs Reed's doting attitude towards parenting, but they are also reflective of the limited opportunities available to women. Prized for her beauty, Georgiana is allowed to cultivate her vanity as a platform on which to base her existence. After her plans to elope are foiled by Eliza (perhaps out of jealousy or her rigid adherence to custom and order), Georgiana dedicates her time to finding a husband, which she duly

achieves, making, 'an advantageous match with a wealthy worn-out man of fashion'. (242) Eliza, on the other hand, does not receive as much narrative attention in her childhood, perhaps because her beauty is inferior to that of her sister and thus, she is of less interest to the servants. In contrast to Georgiana, she learns to be independent but, unlike Jane, relies heavily on religion and scrupulous order to be able to do so, concluding her narrative by taking the veil. Jane's opportunities are not vast in her position, but her comment on this choice of path reflects the importance she attributes to her own liberty: "You are not without sense, cousin Eliza; but what you have, I suppose in another year will be walled up alive in a French convent". (242) Jane recognises that Eliza possesses a certain intelligence, but this reference suggests that she perceives devoting one's life in this way at the expense of personal freedoms would be a waste of her faculties. Jane is provided with two vastly different portrayals of the typical female role as consequences of Mrs Reed's parenting; she rejects both, however, thereby challenging the traditional castes for women in favour of her own path of independence through personal development. Her cousins in their adulthood are far removed from the so-called 'contented, happy, little children' gathered around Mrs Reed in the first scene, suggesting the superficiality and transience of wealth, class and beauty as social constructs.

George Sand's depiction of Valentine's upbringing presents a number of interesting similarities when compared to that of Jane Eyre. Though not an orphan, Valentine, too, is fatherless and brought up in a piecemeal fashion 'par sa soeur bannie, par sa mère orgueilleuse, par les religieuses de son couvent, par sa grand'mère étourdie et jeune'. (1856: 11) 'Fille d'un riche marchande', the comtesse de Raimbault, Valentine's mother, is not aristocratic by birth. Having secured wealth and status through marriage, she is, 'prompte à s'instruire de

l'étiquette, habile à s'y conformer', and exigent in her demands that Valentine follow the scruples of the same code. (26) Sand makes it clear that this behaviour is learned by the comtesse to make her elevation in status convincing and to fulfil an ambition: '[elle] avait aspiré aux grandeurs dès son enfance'. (26) The etiquette of the aristocracy she assumes, therefore, is nothing more than pretension, but nevertheless, Sand presents her natural flaws as being particularly apt for such a rank: 'Vaine, bornée, ignorante', the comtesse, 'était justement la femme qui devait y briller'. (26) The patrician principles that Sand undermines here share common ground with the middle class values of Mrs Reed: they revolve primarily around appearances, the perpetuation of the class system and patriarchal attitudes towards daughters.

Sand expounds the inefficacy of the frictional and out-dated social education that Valentine receives by the contrast between her grandmother's pre-revolutionary bawdy, laissez-faire attitude to life and the comtesse's insistence on principle and restraint. From an early description of Valentine's life, the reader is informed that from her mentors, '[elle] n'avait été définitivement élevée par personne', not least as a result of the contention in the temperaments of her mother and grandmother: 'Tour à tour dépositaire des plaintes et des inimitiés de ces deux femmes, elle était entre elles comme un rocher battu de deux courants contraires'. (11, 25) Valentine is caught in the middle of two clashing ideologies, rendering it impossible to follow either. With reference to Pratt's concept of 'growing down', Sand's metaphor projects a more violent process of erosion, but nevertheless, it is a diminution that is evoked here as opposed to a development or maturation.

The commonality between the ideologies of these two generations, however, is their entrenchment in the class hierarchy and the patriarchal attitudes engrained

in such a power structure. Almost immediately after Sand introduces Valentine's mother and grandmother into the narrative, the comtesse exhibits her full range of prejudices. When Valentine and Bénédict attempt to dance the 'bourrée' together at the May fair, the comtesse rails against such a transgression of everything she has come to represent in her contempt for the bourgeoisie to which she once belonged: 'Vous ne me trouvez pas assez insultée dans la personne de ma fille, quand la canaille de la province a battu des mains en la voyant embrassée par un paysan, sous mes yeux'. (10) In the first instance, and seemingly most offensively, her social position is not respected in the manner she feels is deserved by one of her rank. Secondly, her daughter's actions here directly oppose the etiquette to which she has decreed she adhere: 'Ma fille, je vous défends de danser la bourrée avec tout autre qu'avec M. de Lansac'. (9) Thirdly, the act defies the patriarchal assumption that Valentine is her possession and therefore subject to her control. While Valentine's grandmother does not seem as concerned about appearance and etiquette as her daughter-in-law, her attitudes towards the lower classes are ingrained in her comportment. Sand uses Bénédict's visit to the de Raimbault property to expose these prejudices, which are hitherto overshadowed by those of the comtesse. On his arrival, she warmly invites him to '[v]a [...] te désalterer à l'office', as one of the servants might, before assuming that his skill in singing, as attested to by Valentine, is limited by his agricultural background, despite his having studied in Paris. (21) Sand ridicules such performance of class distinction by adding through the narrator: 'la marquise, malgré toute sa popularité, n'avait pu se décider à offrir un siège au neveu de son fermier'. (21) On the marquise's deathbed, she advises Valentine to love as her heart desires, perhaps even out of wedlock or someone other than her husband, as long as they are not of a different rank: 'Pourquoi ferais-je de l'hypocrisie[?] [...] Aime donc, ma fille [...] Mais reçois

le dernier conseil de ta grand'mère [...] Ne prends jamais un amant qui ne soit pas de ton rang'. (76) The dying advice from Valentine's morally relaxed grandmother urges her to partake of this class prejudice above any other social propriety which, in her life, she appears to have cast aside when it has suited her to do so in the pursuit of hedonism.

These examples reflect how deeply embedded these attitudes towards the class system are in the marquise and the comtesse and indicate how they each would have tried to instil the same values in Valentine in order to burnish the superiority of their rank. Although the comtesse's treatment of Valentine is not quite so physically violent as Mrs Reed's treatment of Jane, they both demand of their charges strict adherence to their respective regimes, which aim similarly to implant class as the anchor of both girls' identities. In both cases, these domestic regimes are more egotistical than benevolent. It is within Mrs Reed's interest to reiterate Jane's unfortunate position as it accentuates her own, and equally, the comtesse's main concern is that Valentine behave according to the customs of her class in order to reflect the status her mother has achieved. The patriarchal tendencies of these women are exposed by their authors. While Mrs Reed subjugates Jane, demanding her silence and compliance, the comtesse bides her time preaching the merits of propriety until she is able to rid herself of the bind of maternity by passing Valentine onto a husband, just as she may any other commodity. Sand also demonstrates the marquise's acquiescence in this scheme when the comtesse becomes concerned that Valentine might taint her reputation, as well as that of the family, before her marriage to Monsieur de Lansac. In response to this hysteria, the marquise consoles: 'il n'y a pas de danger! Valentine n'est-elle pas à la veille d'être mariée? Que craignez-vous ensuite?... Ses fautes, si elle en fait, ne regarderont que son mari; notre tâche sera remplie...' (10-11)

This confirms the argument that the marquise sees their obligation to guide and educate Valentine as finite and functional, serving their own interests rather than providing a process of nurture. Their concern is that Valentine be married as soon as possible so that they can extricate themselves from their parental duty and avoid blame by association for her potential errors.

Ironically, just as the comtesse insists upon Valentine's compliance with the womanly etiquette she has laid out for her, her own motives contest the maternal nature required by the criteria of the feminine ideal. On a number of occasions, Sand makes the comtesse's self-centred attitude to her maternal responsibilities explicit: 'En se sentant débarrassée des devoirs de la maternité, il lui sembla qu'elle rajeunissait de vingt ans'. (58) Even when Valentine's virtue is called into question after her marriage, threatening her entire existence, the comtesse's main concerns revolve around the impact Valentine's actions will have on her own reputation: 'Il est vrai de dire que madame de Raimbault fut navrée de voir la vie de sa fille gâtée à tout jamais, mais il entra encore plus d'orgueil blessé que de tendresse maternelle dans sa douleur'. (77) This discrepancy between how the comtesse acts and how she expects Valentine to act imitates the double standard of the patriarchy, extending even to extra-marital affairs of her own. The narrator makes clear her jealousy of youth and beauty, as represented by Louise and Valentine, and is critical of the way this vanity affects her parenting. When the comtesse is first introduced to Louise, her conceit overrides any maternal affection for her, especially as '[elle] comprit avec effroi qu'avant cinq ans la fille de son mari serait pour elle une rivale', despite her already being married. (26) Sand exposes her hypocrisy through the disparity between her attempts to manipulate Valentine's conduct with Bénédict and the history of her relationship with Louise. On one hand, to Valentine she insists, 'je hais l'inconvenance', and, 'rien n'est pire dans le

monde que les situations ridicules', which could render their reputation precarious, but on the other, in her dealings with Louise she breaks both of these rules. (22) Not only was it rumoured that 'l'homme qui avait séduit Louise [était] [...] l'amant de la comtesse et celui de sa belle-fille', but the comtesse used this error, particularly as it resulted in Louise's pregnancy, as an excuse to expel her from the family and thus rid herself of a rival under the guise of protecting the family's reputation. (26) Any advice she gives Valentine is undermined by her own misdemeanours and selfish interests, as she is unwilling to exercise the restraint that she expects to govern Valentine.

Like Jane, Valentine rejects the morality projected onto her by her mother and grandmother in favour of her own, which appears to stem from a combination of her own natural virtue and the integrity and gentleness as cultivated by Louise. Valentine's comparative lack of prejudice is praised by Athénaïs (who exhibits her fair share of bourgeois class consciousness) before Valentine appears in the narrative. Her appreciation is apropos of the respect with which Valentine has treated her since their infancy in spite of the difference in their social ranks: 'celle-là n'est pas fière; elle n'a pas oublié que nous avons joué ensemble étant petites. Et puis elle a le bon sens de comprendre que la seule distinction, c'est l'argent, et que le nôtre est aussi honorable que le sien'. (6) Into adolescence, Valentine maintains the attitude of equality that is more accessible to children before their natural sense of justice is corrupted by social prejudice. The narrator attributes this instinctive justice to Valentine's nature, which she cultivates herself in the absence of a considered education from her elders.

According to English psychologist Francis Galton, who contributed to the nineteenth-century 'nature versus nurture' debate, 'when nature and nurture compete for supremacy on equal terms [...] the former proves stronger'. (1875: 9)

He argued that 'the highest natural endowments may be starved by defective nurture, while no carefulness of nurture can overcome the evil tendencies of an intrinsically bad *physique*, weak brain, or brutal disposition'. (9) To follow his argument, it can be inferred that toxic nurture cannot delete an inherently good, virtuous nature, which is evident in the characterisation of Louise, Valentine and Jane Eyre. Like Jane, Valentine declines to follow the two female role models with whom she grows up, each advising her in their own way to '[i]mite-moi' as the 'héritière de mon nom' so that she might inherit their prejudices and thus maintain the status of their family name through performance of the tropes of their rank. (1856: 8) In response to these expectations, however, Valentine chooses to adhere to a morality of her own based on her instinctive integrity:

elle s'était faite elle-même ce qu'elle était faite de trouver des sympathies bien réelles dans sa famille, elle avait pris le goût de l'étude et de la rêverie. Son esprit naturellement calme, son jugement sain, l'avaient également préservée des erreurs de la société. (11)

We learn little of the detail of her study, but it is clear that she uses it as an antidote to the way of life presented to her as befitting her affluence by her mother. The connection between her study and the repudiation of the values imposed on her by her family is indicated in this quotation, illustrating the regenerative effects of her learning as well as its role in her self-development.

Valentine's particular hatred of injustice masquerading as propriety can also be traced to the banishing of Louise. From Valentine's reaction to meeting Louise again, the reader notes that she sees her mother's regime as a direct contradiction of her own impulses: 'O Louise! je vous dois peut-être de n'avoir pas un mauvais

coeur; on a tâché de dessécher le mien de bonne heure; on a tout fait pour éteindre le germe de ma sensibilité'. (16) Valentine realises the destructive qualities of her mother's behaviour towards her. For her, Louise is a saving grace among the members of her family; someone who would encourage the development of her gentler traits through exercise of her own. Valentine is presented with a choice between the social morality as performed hypocritically by her mother and her own natural morality as cultivated by Louise. It is her experience of Louise's tender and nurturing approach in her infancy, combined with the letters she receives from her in her exile, which confirm to Valentine the artificiality of the social mores inflicted upon her by her mother. She renounces this social morality in support of her beloved sister: 'chacune d'elles [lettres] m'inspira plus fortement la volonté d'être bonne, la haine de l'intolérance, le mépris des préjugés, et j'ose dire que chacune d'elles marqua un progrès dans mon existence morale'. (16) Louise in exile acts as a living example to Valentine of the results of this social prejudice for an otherwise sensible, kind and intelligent person. It also provides Valentine with an insight into the harsh realities of the obstacles facing women from the point of view of one of the 'fallen'. Valentine's hatred, contrary to her mother's intentions, is directed towards the sentence as opposed to the crime. The fact that the narrator raises the comtesse's attitude towards Louise as a contributing factor to this error implies maternal culpability, and consequently leads readers to question the legitimacy of her retaliation. It is made plain that the comtesse uses social stigmas to justify her actions which are based on selfish feelings of pride and reputation. As Sand highlights the corruption in the comtesse's behaviour, readers are encouraged to support the morality as represented by Valentine and Louise and to challenge social expectations.

Sand's portrayal of the inconsistencies between Valentine's mother's and grandmother's behaviour provides another criticism of Valentine's upbringing and, indeed, of the class system. After Valentine is reunited with Louise, she returns home late, provoking disparate reactions from her female guardians. Her grandmother's response is far more relaxed than that of her mother, who uses the situation as an excuse to take offence and reprimand Valentine for her socially careless behaviour. Her grandmother greets her with the following remark: 'Ah! te voilà, ma petite! [...] Pour moi, je savais bien qu'il ne pouvait t'être rien arrivé de fâcheux dans ce pays-ci, où tout le monde révère le nom que tu portes'. (18) In contrast, of her mother's reaction, Sand writes: 'Quant à la comtesse, chez qui l'orgueil et la violence étaient au moins les vices d'une âme impressionnable, cédant à la force de ses sensations, elle se laissa tomber à demi évanouie sur un fauteuil'. (18) Within this comparison, Sand demonstrates both the incompatibility of these two reactions and the artificiality of the performance of class by the older generations of women. The marquise embodies the patrician habits of the pre-revolutionary aristocracy and therefore assumes that the renown of Valentine's name alone will deter anyone who may wish to do her harm among the lower classes. This nonchalance is accentuated by her meticulous consumption of toast, a matter on which she clearly places greater importance than the whereabouts of her granddaughter. The comtesse on the other hand, is more perturbed at the prospect of a breach of propriety on the part of her daughter which could compromise her reputation by association. She uses this as an occasion to play the part of the emotional mother concerned for the well-being of her child. Her reaction to Valentine's repentance, however, proves the fickleness of this display:

elle repoussa rudement Valentine, lui dit qu'elle avait trop à se plaindre d'elle pour agréer ses soins, et comme la pauvre enfant exprimait sa douleur et demandait son pardon à mains jointes, il lui fut impérieusement ordonné d'aller se coucher sans avoir obtenu le baiser maternel. (18)

Through this refusal of Valentine's contrition, the comtesse illustrates the futility of the 'lesson' she claims to be teaching her daughter, favouring indulgence in the dramatisation of her own emotions over reconciliation. This also indicates that should the opportunity arise, she would likely punish Valentine with the same morality that she exercised over Louise.

Sand's satirical presentation of the habits of the marquise and the comtesse exaggerate them as emblems of the class and generations they represent. Her ridicule of the trivialities of their etiquette and education suggests that Sand sees performance of class as the enemy of growth and equality. Although Valentine regrets having caused her mother pain, this sympathetic reaction to her mother's overly emotional state gives further weight to the success of her natural morality which triumphs over the theatrical excesses of her nurture.

In contrast to Jane and Valentine, neither Emma nor Sue has strong parental mentor figures whose advice they can either use or refuse to found their own morality. In *Madame Bovary*, Flaubert does not disclose any information relating to guidance imparted by Emma's mother, but uses her mother's death as an opportunity for Emma to perform the tropes of bereavement. Her father, on the other hand, is a figure representing the agricultural life that Emma has left behind, but cannot be rid of completely. Unlike the malevolent motives behind Mrs Reed's treatment of Jane and the comtesse's treatment of Valentine, père Rouault clearly cares for his daughter's well-being, but his attitude towards her, once again, is

evocative of his own education. It is notable, for example, that Flaubert includes little conversation between Emma and her father, drawing attention to the lack of guidance Emma receives as an adolescent, yet Rouault assumes his daughter will be satisfied as the wife of a doctor gaining some renown in the province. Noticing Charles's attraction to Emma, Rouault's considerations of a prospective marriage revolve almost entirely around his own financial situation. His attitude towards his daughter is presented as an evaluation of her worth as a worker versus her cost as a lodger, a calculation from which he readily concludes that she is becoming a drain on his finances: 'Le père Rouault n'eût pas été fâché qu'on le débarrassât de sa fille, qui ne lui servait guère dans sa maison. Il l'excusait intérieurement, trouvant qu'elle avait trop d'esprit pour la culture'. (2001: 71-2) In the same way that the comtesse looks forward to Valentine's marriage so that she will no longer be liable for the preservation of her virtue, Rouault sees a prospective marriage as a means of saving money without feeling the effects of restriction. The fact that he has to factor an excuse into his thought processes here demonstrates a conscience which is lacking in the mind of the comtesse, but nevertheless, he prioritises himself in his considerations of Emma's future. Both of these attitudes indicate the social pressure for women to marry so that they do not become burdens, either financial or moral, on their families.

As a representative of the agricultural bourgeoisie, it is a foregone conclusion for Rouault that Emma's destiny lies in marriage. He relieves himself of his duty with the consideration that she has 'trop d'esprit' for farming, but he does not apply the same logic to her suitability for marriage. When Charles almost manages to ask for permission to marry Emma, Rouault does not even give him the chance to finish his sentence before he has all but handed her over to the first suitor who, 'ne chicanerait pas trop sur la dot'. (72) He is eager to give her away as cheaply as

possible for his own advantage, reflecting his subscription to the patriarchal tradition that women are commodities to be bought and sold when they outgrow their purpose, much in the same way as livestock.

Furthermore, Flaubert omits open acceptance of this proposal on Emma's behalf. The conversation between Charles and Rouault is transactional and almost concludes before Rouault even considers Emma. When he does, it is conveyed as an afterthought: 'Quoique sans doute la petite soit de mon idée, il faut pourtant demander son avis'. (73) When he returns to the house to ask Emma's opinion on the plan he has mapped out for her future, which in itself conveys the author's ridicule of the custom, Flaubert conceals Emma from the narrative. He raises doubts in the mind of the reader as to whether she is wholly compliant with this proposition by setting this conversation 'off-stage' inside the house whilst Charles awaits his answer outside. Flaubert underlines the absurdity of the method of this arrangement through the signalling system proposed by Rouault: if he opens the shutters, Charles can leave knowing that he has acquired a wife. Flaubert thus turns the business into a farce by making the proposition unnecessarily convoluted. Flaubert's portrayal of Charles's mediocrity in the first chapter, combined with the theatricality of this scene, could constitute a justification of the regret Emma feels following her marriage, as well as an understandable reason for her ensuing adultery. This leads the reader to empathise with Emma's frustrations when she reflects: 'Pourquoi, mon Dieu! me suis-je mariée?' (96)

Rouault embodies the attitudes typical of a bourgeois farmer of the provinces, unquestioning of the social order and adhering to tradition mindlessly for the simple reason that things have always been done so. Even his name, 'Rouault', is evocative of a wheel — a mechanism which rotates in an endless cycle without breaking off to follow any alternative course. In his thoughts, he is

formulaic and predictable and therefore is perhaps unable to anticipate any behaviour from Emma that deviates from this pattern or aims at anything beyond a life concluded in marriage. As Jacqueline Merriam Paskow argues, the wheel metaphor can be considered an apt expression of Emma's fate. The quotidian tedium of her life; the wheels on the carriage that transports her to her romantic liaisons in Rouen (a town in which the word 'roue' is concealed); her agricultural heritage from which she cannot escape; and the patriarchal grind that only suicide can halt. (see Paskow 2005: 331-2) Rouault, as an agent of social custom that opposes individual diversity, assumes women of his class will be homogenous in their trajectories, fulfilled by marriage and content in domesticity.

The narrator attests to the way in which Emma's desires are quashed by her father in favour of his own agenda when they are planning her wedding:

Emma eût, au contraire, désiré se marier à minuit, au flambeaux; mais le père Rouault ne comprit rien à cet idée. Il y eut donc une noce, où vinrent quarante-trois personnes, où l'on resta seize heures à table, qui recommença l'endemain et quelque peu les jours suivants. (74)

Emma dreams of a romantic atmosphere for her wedding, reflecting the type of emotions she expects to experience in union with her husband, but her father appears to care little for this sentimentality. His commandeering of proceedings reflects his own interests and the habits of his class, advocating gluttony and drunkenness as markers of his wealth over the elegance that Emma would have preferred. In fact, in this reference, Rouault's party adheres to the comtesse de Raimbault's stereotype of the 'canaille' almost precisely: 'pourvu qu'on la fit boire et manger, on pouvait ensuite lui marcher sur le ventre sans qu'elle se révoltât'.

(1856: 44) Flaubert exacerbates this stereotype here through exaggeration of consumption which overflows into the following days, illustrating the gourmand nature of the celebrations of the agricultural class.

The bawdiness is typified by the pranks some of the guests attempt to play on the bride and groom on their wedding night which are in keeping with the traditions of their class. Rouault, in fact, has to prevent the guests from playing wedding-night pranks, as he feels that 'la position grave de son gendre ne permettait pas de telles inconvenances'. (2001: 78) He defers to Charles's professional rank and expects his kin to share in this respect for the doctor. In Rouault's experience, Charles has demonstrated medical prowess by healing his broken leg; from his point of view, 'il n'aurait pas été mieux guéri par les premiers médecins d'Yvetôt où même de Rouen'. (64) Rouault's assumption of Charles's prestige enables him to justify the marriage, as his considerations do not extend beyond emblems of class and the supposition of associated financial security. Superficially, Charles appears to be a socially beneficial prospect for Rouault's 'educated' daughter, meaning that Rouault can marry her off in good conscience.

While Rouault provides little by way of advice for Emma, his attitude towards money could be held to account for the frivolity that eventually consumes her. In spite of the accumulating loss he makes on the farm, when it comes to his own comfort, he ensures that his luxury is maintained with no expense spared: 'Il ne retirait pas de volontiers ses mains de dedans ses poches, et n'épargnait point la dépense pour tout ce qui regardait sa vie, voulant être bien nourri, bien chauffé, bien couché'. (72) He is not concerned with aesthetics, but he is unwilling to economise where his physical comfort is concerned. Emma does not inherit his inclination to physical gluttony as it would not befit the fashionable image she

desires for herself, but she imitates this poor money management to possess decorative symbols of affluence.

In an attempt at self-consolation after Léon departs Yonville, Emma spends money to assuage her regret in not having prioritised her happiness, allowing an opportunity for pleasure to pass her by: 'Comment n'avait-elle pas saisi ce bonheur-là, quand il se présentait!' (187) To satisfy her lust, she transfers her desire for Léon onto more easily obtainable objects that she can possess in their entirety: 'Elle s'acheta un prie-Dieu gothique [...] elle écrivit à Rouen, afin d'avoir une robe en cachemire bleu; elle choisit chez Lheureux la plus belles de ses écharpes'. (188) Prior to this decadent purchase list, the narrator comments: 'une femme qui s'était imposé de si grands sacrifices pouvait bien se passer des fantaisies'. (188) On one hand, it could be argued that this tone mocks Emma's behaviour — after all, the 'sacrifices' in question refer to a missed opportunity to commit adultery. On the other, however, Flaubert presents her extravagances as a coping mechanism to soothe the inner turmoil that alienates her: 'que la passion se consuma jusqu'aux cendres, et qu'aucun secours ne vint, qu'aucun soleil ne parut, il fut de tous côtés nuit complète, et elle demeura perdue dans un froid horrible que la traversait'. (188) In conveying the depth of her isolation through apocalyptic imagery of the darkness that eventually consumes her, Flaubert provides insight into the severity of Emma's depression. Although her passion is extreme, the fact that there is no recourse partially justifies Emma's attempts to distract herself through the only outlet she has learned from her father's 'taste for the creature comforts'. (Wiedner 1978: 58) Flaubert demonstrates the effects of a growing addiction in the absence of guidance or support, leading her to adhere to what Else M. Wiedner refers to as a 'tone of unrealistic self-indulgence'. (58) It is not the fantasies or adultery *per se*, but the over-spending to subdue her woes or

heighten her fantasies that leads to the insurmountable debt that triggers her suicide. These consequences form part of the legacy of Rouault's negligence.

Jude the Obscure differs from the other three novels in that it makes reference to Sue's parents only through narrative comment. From these references, it can be inferred that Sue's mother and father were not enslaved by their rank like the parents and guardians of the other novels. There is no pressure instilled in Sue to marry for money nor to adhere to customs which associate her with prosperity. Her parents' absence provides an example of liberation, seemingly stemming from a loss of faith in the institution of marriage which led liberal thinkers of the 1890s, such as barrister and individualist Wordsworth Donisthorpe, to raise questions as to whether 'the State [ought] to be party to any agreement concerning sexual arrangements'. (Donisthorpe 1892: 259) From a conversation between Jude and his great-aunt, the reader learns that Sue's mother 'so disliked living living with [Sue's father] [...] that she went away to London'. (2016: 60) In a similar fashion, Jude's parents separated one day after 'they had had their last difference'. (60) Hardy sows the premonition that '[t]he Fawleys were not made for wedlock', thereby creating the tension between society's insistence upon cementing relationships with marriage and the individual's desire to love outside of sanction that underpins the novel. (60) Although Hardy is ambiguous as to what happened between Sue's parents and what became of them after their separation, these references demonstrate that old certainties about marriage are not unassailable. Sue's parents reject conventional compliance to the marriage contract, suggesting a middle-class break towards liberation, but the tone with which this is described implies that this unconventional behaviour comes at a cost to the individual and their progeny. Sue's inclination to study and justify her arguments at an advanced level can be traced back to the middle-class unrest

exhibited by her parents; although there is no evidence to indicate that they were educated themselves, Sue's quest to substantiate individualistic action through intellectual endeavour could be seen as the next stage in the process towards enlightenment. Having benefitted intellectually from the broadening of educational access for women in the second half of the century, it can be assumed that Sue would have been better placed to cultivate such habits than her mother before her. The absence of Sue's mother means that there is no concrete parental advice to discuss, however, the insight into the parental example that Sue has been set reveals a legacy of conduct that Sue carries into her marriage to Phillotson.

It is notable that Hardy does not place blame on Sue's parents for having acted according to their desires. Rather, he places importance on the inclinations of the individual through the words he attributes to Drusilla: 'There's sommat in our blood that won't take kindly to the notion of being bound to do what we do readily enough if not bound'. (60) The repetition of the word 'bound' leads the reader to view marriage as a restraint as opposed to an institution that supports the pursuit of freedom. Sue employs such argument in debate with Jude regarding how their relationship should be conducted. Where Jude conventionally assumes their bond will culminate in marriage, notwithstanding the advice from his aunt and his previous experience with Arabella, Sue refers to the marriage oath as 'an iron contract' which would 'extinguish' the affection they had for one another: 'I think I should begin to be afraid of you, Jude, the moment you had contracted to cherish me under a Government stamp, and I was licensed to be loved on the premises by you — Ugh, how horrible and sordid!' (210) For Sue, matrimonial convention as championed by the government is the killer of the passion of the individual. Whatever feelings she harboured for Phillotson were quashed by the bind of the marriage contract and transformed into repulsion whenever he attempted any

physical proximity to her. This attitude reflects those of the emerging 'New Woman' writers of the 1890s. An example is provided by 'New Woman' novelist, Ella Hepworth Dixon, who argued in 1899 that the advances in education that women had received over the previous twenty years had led to 'a more critical attitude towards their masculine contemporaries', creating a more widespread 'doubt of the institution of marriage': 'many pause on the brink and, choosing the known evil, remain celibate'. (Dixon 1899: 391, 395) Although Sue marries Phillotson without full consideration of what it entails, she follows the example set by her mother, persuading him to divorce her so that she might operate in harmony with her emotions. Subsequently hesitant to embark on the same path with Jude, she rejects the unknown in favour of preserving the equality of their relationship. Whereas the parental education received by Valentine and Emma pushes them towards marriage, either for reasons of reputation or to hasten an end to parental responsibility, the precedent set by Sue's mother has the opposite effect, providing by example the realities of marriage and the ensuing urge to escape it. This flight deprives Sue of a maternal mentor, but attests to a desperation on the part of her mother which led her to eschew society's expectations, irrespective of the potential threat to her well-being this could incur, in favour of regaining freedom and independence

The advice against marriage is reiterated by Sue's father who echoes Drusilla's argument that their family is 'the wrong breed for marriage'. (139) In contrast to Valentine's mother's rigorous insistence upon propriety in relationships outside of wedlock, Sue's father appears to pay no heed to Sue's cohabitation with the Christminster scholar, bluntly refusing to "have [her] back" when she finds herself alone in London after the scholar's death. (123) This does not appear to be derived from concern for custom, but suggests that he no longer wants to be held

accountable for his parental responsibilities, indicating his unconventionality. It is thus that he forces Sue's independence, though this is not through any obvious affection for her. The example he sets suggests that she should avoid dependence, which provides her with another reason to assert her will as both her parents do. His apathy towards Sue's marital status is made distinct when she requests Jude to give her away to Phillotson on the basis that her father isn't "friendly enough to be willing". (140-1) This poses a striking contrast to père Rouault, who virtually herds Emma down the aisle as soon as the opportunity arises. This said, the motive behind the fathers' behaviour is comparable: they demonstrate an inclination to rid themselves of their parental duty.

The parents and guardians discussed indicate, in various ways, a negligent attitude towards the female protagonists which manifests itself as an obstacle to their completion of *Bildung*. In *Jane Eyre*, *Valentine* and *Madame Bovary*, the preservation of class and assets, or the ambition to ascend the social hierarchy, is presented as a hindrance to a morality based on justice and the pursuit of female desire. In the case of Valentine and Emma, parental preoccupations of rank push them towards marriage prematurely, trapping them within the social structure before they have developed a mature understanding of themselves or the repercussions of induction into the institution. Although Sue's parental example suggests a warning against marital commitment, the absence of her parents deprives her of concrete advice on the matter. In each of these cases, the effect of such characterisation of parents and guardians is to draw the reader's attention to the social mechanisms by which the heroines are thwarted; in other words, the factors that inhibit 'happy' socialisation and an optimistic conclusion to the *Bildungsroman*. Unlike Wilhelm Meister, the female protagonists are unable to escape their 'errors' or extricate themselves from their paternal influences, which

narrows their opportunities and prevents them from achieving social harmony. In the case of Jane Eyre, her interaction with Mrs Reed and the servants serve a similar purpose, awakening her to the ways in which she might be subordinated in wider society; the difference is the edifying influence of her reading, combined with intellectual and emotional support of other female characters, which allow her to develop a more substantial understanding of herself before she commits herself to marriage.

4.2 Female Communities

The female communities that appear in *Jane Eyre* and *Valentine* pose a marked contrast to the negligence and egotism exhibited by the parents and guardians in all four novels. Jane and Valentine forge their own support networks with female characters based on the potential for reciprocal learning and nurture, which offer the possibility to advance the course of their *Bildung*. In *Jane Eyre* these communities are formed twice: once at Lowood with Helen Burns and Miss Temple, and again with the Rivers sisters at Moor House. It is no accident that it is a book that ignites conversation between Jane and Helen in the first instance.

Jane's appetite for reading, which isolated her in the Reed household, encourages her to act on the instinctive connection she feels towards Helen, whereas hitherto, social interaction of this the was 'contrary to [her] nature and habits'. (2000: 49)

The book acquaints her with an aspect of herself that has previously remained untapped due to her hostile familial circumstances: 'I hardly know where I found the hardihood thus to open a conversation with a stranger; [...] but I think her occupation touched a chord of sympathy somewhere; for I too liked reading'. (49)

The word 'hardihood' leads the reader to make a connection between the book and an inner resilience of which Jane is as yet unaware. This is the first occasion

where Jane finds an interest in common with another character, and it is no coincidence that the pursuit in question pertains to the intellect. This conversation establishes Helen's status as a mentor figure to Jane, beginning with Jane's assessment of the book she finds her reading — Samuel Johnson's philosophical novel, *Rasselas* (1759). By Jane's own admission, despite her aptitude for analysis of history and satire, her previously unschooled tastes were inclined to reading 'of a frivolous and childish kind'. (49) After examination of Johnson's work, a text more complex than the tales of 'fairies' and 'genii' that usually roused her excitement, she judges the contents 'dull to [her] trifling taste'. (49) Brontë does not dwell on the contents of the book, however, she describes Jane's reading habits as 'frivolous', 'childish' and 'trifling', leading to the assumption that an even more analytical mode of reading is practised by Helen at a similarly tender age. (49) The 'closely printed pages' of *Rasselas* lack the 'bright variety' that would usually capture the attention of a child, but Helen's inclination to a pursuit of this nature indicates an intellectual maturity that promises to be of benefit to Jane. (49, 50)

Their conversation consists of a rally of question and responses instigated by Jane which is reminiscent of the 'learning by rote' method practised in the classroom. She has a list of enquiries about her new surroundings and thus enlists Helen as her guide, setting the dynamic for their subsequent relationship. In the course of this induction, Helen responds to Jane's enquiries about Miss Temple: "Miss Temple is very good, and very clever: she is above the rest, because she knows far more than they do". (51) Helen's evaluation of Miss Temple's worth is based foremost on an appreciation of her intellect, which Helen judges to be superior to that of the other teachers. She makes no comment on her appearance,

which would usually be expected in a description of a young woman, reflecting the importance she attributes to education.

Brontë presents education as a similarly inspiring prospect for Jane in the scene in which she and Helen share tea with Miss Temple. Jane is at once struck by the 'refined propriety in [Miss Temple's] language, which precluded deviation into the ardent, the excited, the eager', a skill that Jane has not yet mastered. (75) She is also captivated by the depth of knowledge exhibited by Helen, a girl of only fourteen years old. Having previously perceived Helen's appearance as 'pale and bloodless', the 'fervid eloquence' which characterises her in intellectual conversation with Miss Temple draws out 'a beauty neither of fine colour, nor long eyelash, nor pencilled brow, but of meaning, of movement, of radiance'. (73) As someone who is openly self-deprecating about her appearance, it would be easy for Jane to dwell on physical characteristics here as she does at first when she learns of Blanche Ingram's striking looks; however, Brontë is clear to distinguish between the superficial beauty of lash and brow, which can be accentuated through the artifice of make up, and the beauty of 'meaning' which shines from within through exercise of the intellectual capacities. Jane's assessment of beauty and meaning is on a par with Helen's; they do not base their assessment of a woman's worth on superficialities, but admire intellectual passion and strive to hone their own capacities in this field. Beauty in such terms does not conform to that of the perceived ideal Victorian woman, but is presented by Brontë as more captivating and substantial than any pleasing aesthetics.

Jane never explicitly denounces the school curriculum she follows at Lowood, but Brontë's portrayal of the nature of the conversation between Helen and Miss Temple reveals a criticism of the quality of the education that able girls can access:

They conversed of things I had never heard of [...] they spoke of books: how many they had read! What stores of knowledge they possessed! They seemed so familiar with French names and French authors [...] Miss Temple asked Helen if she sometimes snatched a moment to recall the Latin her father had taught her. (73)

Brontë simultaneously sets a benchmark for Jane in the stakes of self-education and presents knowledge as an untapped resource, desirable and enticing for women. While it is true that Lowood offers 'a better than prototypical education for a nineteenth-century lower middle-class female', Brontë uses Helen and Miss Temple to convey the idea that there is yet greater delight to be shared through what Cecily E. Hill calls 'stolen knowledge'. (Davis 2009: 3, Hill 2016: 185) This is even more subversive in this case as it establishes a private, intellectual female community within an establishment run by Brocklehurst, the embodiment of the patriarchy in all its damaging forms. Together, these women form a bond based on that which is withheld from them by the established social order, relishing an activity which defies the limits imposed on both their class and sex. To follow Hill's argument, '[i]n a most unladylike fashion, Miss Temple and Helen both value the knowledge normally given to wealthy men', and they inspire Jane to do the same. (185) The effect of this company is made evident immediately and underpins the women's status as mentor figures to Jane. Witnessing Helen display the extent of her private learning, Jane feels her 'organ of Veneration expanding' and, along with a little extra sustenance provided by Miss Temple, she gains nourishment as if they had feasted 'on nectar and ambrosia'. (73-72) This latter reference provides further evidence that Jane follows the example of learning set in this conversation,

gaining knowledge of Greek myth which was traditionally reserved for a male education to allow access to the universities.

Academia aside, the kindness exhibited by Miss Temple in this scene is memorable to the narrator, as it is the first instance of true adult care that Jane receives. Shaken by Brocklehurst's humiliation tactics, Jane is almost ready to 'abandon [her]self', having been wrenched from the brink of progress and acceptance by his order to 'exclude' and 'scrutinize' her. (68) Brontë contrasts this egotistical spite to Miss Temple's integrity. When informed that Jane has been 'wrongly accused', Miss Temple reassures her that she is not defined by what others say of her, but by her own behaviour: "We shall think you what you prove yourself to be, my child. Continue to act as a good girl and you will satisfy me". (70) This meritocratic approach to respect and justice is akin to Jane's own, allowing her to validate her morality through the support of an authoritative voice. Miss Temple defies patriarchal authority by undermining Brocklehurst's prejudice; her approach to education and the assessment of human worth is of a more egalitarian nature, endowing the individual with the agency to redeem themselves regardless of the strength of social opinion. Unlike the hypocrisy manifested by the 'black marble clergyman', Miss Temple, true to her name, is depicted as the true haven of Christian tolerance in whom Helen and Jane can safely place their trust. (66) In her explanation of true justice, she does not trivialise the situation at hand, but refers to justice in more general terms in order to encourage Jane to tell her story objectively: "when a criminal is accused, he is always allowed to speak in his own defence. You have been charged with a falsehood: defend yourself to me as well as you can". (71) She grants Jane a voice with which to affirm herself, posing further contention to Brocklehurst's policy of silence, obedience and self-renunciation.

Cecily E. Hill is of the opinion that the lasting impression created by Miss Temple is one of weakness. She argues that she is a woman who 'must submit to Brocklehurst's attempts at mental reformation', due to her subordinate position within the several hierarchies at play. (Hill 2016: 187) However, Brontë's emphasis on the regenerative impact of Miss Temple's just and gentle advice reflects the benefit of this kind of approach within an atmosphere intended to crush the will of the individual. While it is true that these acts of defiance on Miss Temple's part are committed when Brocklehurst is 'physically absent', Sarah E. Maier's argument that this is because 'she is insufficiently strong' appears contrary to Brontë's intentions. (Maier 2007: 323) Maier's statement that 'Jane must [...] reject Miss Temple's masked and repressed resentment', is destabilised by the potency of the justice that she exercises and its transformative impact upon Jane. (Maier 2007: 323) Brocklehurst reduces Jane to a girl completely subjugated by the patriarchy: weeping, 'prostrate', with 'face to the ground', she avowedly 'wished to die'. (68) Within the space of just a few minutes, Miss Temple revives her physically, mentally and emotionally through a feast of seed-cake, self-affirmation and intellectual stimulation. These are divisive acts which constitute a substantial, if covert, rebellion. Furthermore, Brontë allows this method of education to prevail over those used by Brocklehurst. '[R]elieved of a grievous load', thanks to Miss Temple's willingness to exonerate her, Jane is spurred into action, 'resolv[ing] to pioneer [her] way through every difficulty'. (74) Miss Temple's resistance to Brocklehurst's orders is revealed by her 'involuntary smile' and even Helen, who is otherwise deferential and accepting of punishment, professes to Jane that he "is not a god; nor is he even a great and admired man". (64, 69) His cruelty is overall ineffective, as his prejudices render him absurd. Miss Temple's efforts to mould individual personalities in fact create a united force opposing the effects of

Brocklehurst's regime. This contributes to Jane's future compulsion to overthrow systems with which she does not agree, which underpins the positive course of her *Bildung*. This point is supported by Kirstin Hanley, who argues that 'Miss Temple's quiet, yet effective resistance to Mr. Brocklehurst reveals that it is acceptable to undermine masculine authority if it does not comport with one's sense of what is right'. (Hanley 2009) This constitutes 'an understanding which enables Jane to defy that authority when necessary', attesting to the strength cultivated by Miss Temple. (Hanley 2009) Far from a revelation of weakness, Miss Temple's outlook conveys strong support for Jane's individualism and reinforces her natural morality as explored in the Reed household.

Miss Temple is a teacher by profession, but her most important lessons do not pertain to the curriculum: she provides Jane with an example of how to resist male authority in a calmly subversive way in her defiance of Brocklehurst and her pursuit of knowledge reserved for men. In contrast, Helen contributes to Jane's spiritual education through demonstration of an alternative doctrine of forbearance, which benefits Jane in times of emotional challenge, but also highlights the boundaries of the treatment she is willing to accept from others. Witnessing Helen's public flogging, Jane notes the stark distinction in their instinctive responses: 'while I paused from my sewing because my fingers quivered at this spectacle with a sentiment of unavailing and impotent anger, not a feature of [Helen's] pensive face altered its ordinary expression'. (54) Presented with injustice, Jane is compelled to refute it. Helen's instinct, on the other hand, is to endure physical suffering through suppression of the emotions, but her true feelings are betrayed by the trace of a tear glisten[ing] on her thin cheek' after the conclusion of the punishment. (54) This indicates that such endurance is not a natural reaction for a child, but a coping mechanism that Helen has learned having

born the brunt of such aggression in the past. Helen reveals that she does not perceive this physical violence as cruelty, but as an intrinsic part of the education to correct what she refers to as 'my faults'. (55) Having laid out the extenuating circumstances that prevented Helen from meeting the required standards, Brontë makes it clear that Helen has committed no sin to warrant such an attack, indicating a criticism of the punitive attitude towards girls' formal schooling which can be traced back to her own experiences at Cowan Bridge. As such, the reader is encouraged to support Jane's reaction to the abuse. Imagining her hypothetical retaliation in Helen's position, Jane would resist: "if she struck with that rod, I should get it from her hand; I should break it under her nose". (55) Though she exaggerates her bravery, examples of Jane's previous vehemence against maltreatment lead the reader to believe in her rebellion and support her mutiny against institutionalised injustice.

As was expected of Victorian women, Helen declines to challenge the status quo. She counters Jane's passion with the advice: "It is far better to endure patiently a smart which nobody feels but yourself, than to commit a hasty action whose evil consequences will extend to all connected with you — and besides, the Bible bids us return good for evil". (55) Despite Helen's subversive thirst for knowledge, which falls outside the typical parameters of socially acceptable femininity, she adheres to the expectations of her as a budding woman in her practice of restraint, unwavering tolerance and self-effacement. Jane's individualistic avowal that she 'could not bear' such treatment is viewed as immature by Helen, who attempts to correct this error by underlining the social expectations to which she is expected to conform: "it is weak and silly to say you *cannot bear* what it is your fate to be required to bear". (56) Strength for Helen is manifested through silence following the redemptive teachings of Christ in the New

Testament; however, these are also tools used by the patriarchy to ensure submission and reinforce the power structures that perpetuate the status quo. Jane's 'an eye for an eye' approach to justice is dismissed by Helen as the view of an 'untaught girl', attributing this fault to her lack of education on the matter. (57) Brontë leads the reader to question their own morality by furnishing Jane with a compelling and logical argument to support her preferred mode of justice which acknowledges the rights of the repressed individual: "When we are struck without a reason, we should strike back again very hard [...] so hard as to teach the person who struck us never to do it again". (57) The driving force behind Jane's passion is the impetus to change things that do not serve everyone alike. She is referring to personal situations experienced first-hand by a child, but application of her argument in a feminist context does not require much alteration from the point of view of the modern reader.

Helen explains her 'creed' to Jane as a gateway to a peaceful afterlife, which she deems more rewarding than a life of striving for equality. (59) She advises Jane that the New Testament's teachings are the linchpin of the morality of "Christians and civilized nations", as opposed to the Old Testament's retributive morality held by "[h]eathens and savage tribes". (58) It might be imagined that Helen's acceptance of custom would eventually allow her *Bildung* to culminate in her accommodation by society, but Brontë indicates that this expectation would be misleading. Miss Scatcherd does not praise Helen for the forbearance of her punishment, concluding instead that "nothing can correct [her]". (54) Furthermore, negligence on the part of Brocklehurst, a representative of a 'civilised nation', hastens the death she welcomes. Regardless of having followed the mores of civilisation, she is destroyed by it, unlike Jane whose survival is dependent on her rejection of the paths laid out for her.

Despite Jane's refusal of Helen's self-effacing ideology, she subverts elements of her advice on self-control for reasons of self-assertion. An example of this can be seen following Helen's gentle reprimand for Jane's passion in her minute detailing of Mrs Reed's crimes, which endows Jane with an understanding of the power of emotional control. The regenerative effect of female support is reinforced when Jane takes her turn as Brocklehurst's victim on the 'pedestal of infamy': 'I mastered the rising hysteria, lifted my head, and took a firm stand on the stool'. (67) In the face of subjugation, a smile from Helen 'imparted strength in [...] transit', allowing Jane to regain mastery of her emotions and to resist crumbling under scrutiny on a public platform. (67) By maintaining composure under these circumstances, Jane practises a form of agency aided by Helen, whom she subsequently describes as 'a hero' for the resurrection of her spirits. (67) Restraint of this ilk is also evident when she recounts her history to Miss Temple, but in this case, she achieves emotional control independently: 'mindful of Helen's warnings against the indulgence of resentment, I infused into the narrative far less of gall and wormwood than ordinary. Thus restrained and simplified, it sounded more credible: I felt as I went on that Miss Temple fully believed me'. (71) She prevents her objectives becoming hindered by her vengeful feelings and gains control over her narrative by asserting herself through her authorship, effecting a more persuasive account. Such instances demonstrate the significance of Helen's influence on Jane's emotional education. Jane is unwilling to imitate Helen's Christ-like endurance of tyranny, yet adopting elements of Helen's approach teaches her how to quell unhelpful emotions and refine her vocabulary to enhance her plausibility as an author.

The potential for Valentine to benefit from the regenerative effects of female companionship is also alluded to by Sand, although the social realities

experienced first-hand by Louise render their relationship more problematic in their adulthood. Louise's position as her sister's mentor is complicated by Sand on three counts: on one hand, she is torn between advising Valentine to pursue personal happiness to the detriment of duty, but on the other, she has lived experience of the of the social consequences of flouting custom. Additionally, her growing desire for Bénédict renders her counsel increasingly subjective. The relationships forged between Miss Temple, Helen and Jane are possible thanks to shared intellectual objectives without the intrusion of passion as a conflict of interest. Unfortunately, the same is not to be enjoyed by Valentine and Louise, and as such, the pavilion cannot function as a restorative space like Miss Temple's office, despite the sisters' shared intellectual curiosity.

Sand's depiction of Louise is a paradigm of the way in which social restrictions impede female *Bildung* and prevent women from developing to their full potential. The effects of her ostracisation are such that she is unable to nurture her son as effectively as she once did Valentine, her capacity to mentor her sister is compromised and her intellectual promise is overshadowed by the hardships she has undergone. Pregnancy outside of marriage forces her to live a clandestine existence which is not expected of Wilhelm Meister, who is not made to repent for the expression of his sexual nature. She is not afforded the lenience shown to Wilhelm, and the permanence of the shame she must carry necessitates self-abnegation. Valentine demonstrates at once her liberation and the naivety of her youth in her failure to comprehend the enduring consequences of sexual transgression: 'Peut-on t'accuser éternellement d'une faute commise dans l'âge de l'ignorance et de la faiblesse?' (1856: 61) Although Sand suggests that Louise is worthy of redemption, the answer to the question is self-evident.

Louise finds herself caught between encouraging her sister to exert her agency and the fear of leading her towards 'l'abîme'. (38) By breaking away from Lansac, defying her mother and acting upon her desire for Bénédict, Louise imagines that Valentine could create for herself 'au sein de l'obscurité une vie d'amour, de courage, et de liberté', but this would entail a sacrifice of privilege in the name of love. (38) Yet, the strongest lesson that Louise can teach Valentine is eventually provided by her own example: 'sa vie passée était souillée d'une tache ineffaçable'. (60) Sand leads the reader to empathise with the difficulties of the position of 'pauvre Louise' by emphasising her natural virtue. (38) Throughout the novel, Louise argues on the side of diplomacy, demonstrating the compassion that underpins her 'âme noble', but the friction mounting between her duties, her experience and her own feelings leads her towards uncharacteristic intolerance. (59) Her frustrations culminate in a bitterness towards Valentine, who has known nothing of the hardships she has experienced, but expects her continued advice: 'Les femmes comme vous, Valentine. [...] doivent chercher leur force en elles-mêmes et ne pas la demander aux autres'. (61) In an expression of exasperation, she pushes Valentine towards independence in an assertion of her own; it is clear, however, that her resentment hinges upon the absence of a mentor figure in her own life, combined with the continued expectation that she fulfil this very role for her comparatively comfortable sister. She has been required to live a selfless existence shaped by the selfishness of others, but it becomes evident that perpetual renunciation of personal desires eventually inhibits the gentle temperament of even natural caregivers. Furthermore, Sand acknowledges the existence of female sexual impulses which remain ardent for Louise irrespective of her banishment for having acted on them previously. This recognition of strong

desires in women is reaffirmed in Valentine's later yielding to Bénédict which cannot be prevented regardless of Louise's warnings.

Through her sympathetic presentation of Louise, Sand leads the reader to understand how experience has altered Louise's character and prevented her from achieving in areas in which she appears born to excel. Simultaneously sound of intellect and a natural mother, it is pitiable that she is unable to hone her faculties to their full extent. The use Valentine and Louise make of the pavilion highlights this loss of potential. It is initially set up by Valentine 'pour s'en servir comme de cabinet d'étude', equipped with 'des livres et son chevalet', and yet Louise's son is the only character able to reap its full benefits. (58) Louise uses the space to socialise with Valentine to 'oublier ses amertumes secrètes', but it is hard to ignore this as a missed opportunity for co-operative intellectual development between two able-minded women. The consequence is that they are unable to establish a female community of the intellectual kind that appears in *Jane Eyre*; whereas Jane is revitalised on several occasions through exercise of her intellect in the company of female peers, Valentine and Louise are unable to use their faculties for mutual development. Consequently, they never recover completely, either from their altercations or the social pressures that weigh heavily upon them. To return to Galton's argument, while he is of the opinion that nature is more potent than nurture, he concedes that 'the environment amid which the growth takes place' is the factor that distinguishes whether 'natural tendencies may be strengthened or thwarted'. (1875: 9) In *Valentine*, Sand presents a convincing case attesting to the way in which social preoccupations thwart the development of the individual in multiple ways. It is thus that the pavilion can be considered as a 'failed' version of Miss Temple's office or Moor House in *Jane Eyre*. Access to resources is no object here; the problem is that neither woman is able to take advantage of an

intellectually beneficial environment within a society that punishes natural female desires.

Jane's experiences with the Rivers sisters are advantageous to her course of *Bildung* on numerous levels. Having rejected Rochester's offer of elopement, she stumbles across them at a period in her development where her self-esteem is at its lowest and her ability to achieve independence from a position of destitution seems doubtful. On arrival at the threshold of Moor House, she finds Mary and Diana absorbed in self-study and feels an instant connection to them. Brontë presents their translation of Schiller's *Die Räuber* (1781) as a labour-intensive task requiring a level of concentration that makes Emma Bovary's fleeting attempts to learn Italian pale into insignificance. This arduous pursuit is indicative of the ambition fuelling it; it is an occupation as opposed to a simple means of passing the time, raising it above the remit of the 'accomplishments'. Moreover, the task reinforces the bond between the sisters as they are united by their labour towards self-improvement and the possibility of independence. Their camaraderie poses a contrast to the isolation in which Jane has undertaken the majority of her self-study, meaning that they can share in each other's difficulties and successes. Through the window, Jane hears one of the women admit: "it's tough work pegging away at a language with no master but a lexicon". (2000: 333) On one hand, this consolidates the challenging nature of the task, and on the other, it attests to the idea that self-study was a necessity for women who were required to develop mastery over advanced content which might enable them to support themselves. The activity is not conducted for the admiration of any onlooker, so the women are able to devote themselves entirely to the development of their cognitive processes. Whereas Valentine becomes increasingly dependent on

Louise, the Rivers sisters collaborate, but still work as entities independent of one another with a view to improving their prospects.

Such an environment represents the intellectual and physical provision of which Jane is deprived in her exposure to the elements, but her triumph over circumstance is confirmed by her narrative voice, attesting to the future success of her *Bildung*: 'At a later day, I knew the language and the book; [...] though, when I first heard it, it was only like the stroke on a sounding brass to me — conveying no meaning'. (332) Even before her discovery of their familial connection, Jane's residence at Moor House is established as another period of intellectual and emotional transition, the progress of which is confirmed from the outset. Her admission to the house marks her social re-acceptance: 'Somehow, now that I had once crossed the threshold of this house, and once was brought face to face with its owners, I felt no longer outcast, vagrant, and disowned by the outside world'. (337) She is treated as neither the 'interloper [nor] alien' that Brocklehurst branded her and is permitted to rise the next day as an equal. (66) Her clothes washed and neat, she is allowed to erase evidence of the trauma she has undergone and re-emerge with 'no speck of the dirt, no trace of the disorder [she] so hated, and which seemed to degrade [her]', a luxury not afforded to Louise. (340) The Rivers sisters' care has a regenerative effect on Jane before the learning process has begun which has the effect of stabilising the path of her *Bildung*, allowing her the opportunity to gather her forces and 'beg[i]n once more to know [her]self'. (337)

Although St. John's initial benevolence migrates to a policy of control, the equality between Jane and the sisters endures regardless, underlining the significance of the relationship. The shared interests and common objectives that are overshadowed in Valentine and Louise's narrative take precedence here, fuelling conversation and allowing filial affection to flourish: 'They were both more

accomplished and better read than I was: but with eagerness I followed in the path of knowledge they had trodden before me. [...] Thought fitted thought; opinion met opinion: we coincided [...] perfectly'. (350) Brontë firmly establishes the sisters as intellectual mentors to Jane, but this does not incur a struggle for supremacy. The jealousy with which Jane initially encounters Blanche Ingram and which transforms Louise's gentleness into resentment is omitted here. The repetition of 'thought' and 'opinion' balances the clauses, reiterating at once the equality and intellectual quality of the attachment. Brontë consolidates the egalitarian nature of this relationship by illustrating that the women are interchangeable in their roles as teacher and pupil. While Diana teaches Jane German, Jane instructs Mary in drawing, causing their bond to deepen: '[Their] natures dovetailed: mutual affection — of the strongest kind — was the result'. (350) It is thus that Jane's self-confidence is repaired — in a fusion of intellectual endeavour and mutual respect.

Diana in particular is integral to Jane's emotional education, offering her support after St. John's proposal that Jane accompany him to India as his wife. While Diana holds her brother in high esteem, when Jane reveals that his intention is to use her as a helpmeet, Diana is aghast: "Madness! [...] You would not live three months there". (415) Her regard for Jane's welfare provokes a more vehement reaction than the knowledge that Jane has rejected her brother's hand, indicating not just her affection for Jane, but the importance she ascribes to the mental and physical wellbeing of the individual woman. Diana knows that accompanying her brother would entail self-renunciation and almost reprimands Jane for considering acquiescing to the scheme: "unfortunately, I have noticed, whatever he exacts, you force yourself to perform". (415) She opposes Jane's deference to St. John as a figure of the patriarchy, rebuffing Jane's claim that, India aside, her plain appearance would never suit such a man: "Plain! You? Not

at all. You are much too pretty, as well as too good, to be grilled alive in Calcutta”.

(415) Diana contradicts the flaws Jane identifies with and encourages her to view herself in a similarly positive light; the effect of this is to convince Jane that she is worth more than the servitude that St. John envisages for her.

Their relationship is deepened further as Diana acts as a sounding board against which Jane can test a morality that rejects marriage as the ultimate female calling. Diana reassures Jane that it would be “unnatural — out of the question” that she should submit to a man who has branded her “formed for labour — not for love” and does not value relationships based on equality or mutual feeling.

(416) Diana supports Jane’s repugnance at the idea of being “chained for life to a man who regarded one but as a useful tool”, which demonstrates that she does not subscribe to the belief that it is women’s duty to capitulate to men when it is likely to prove to their detriment, and perhaps even death. (416) Jane’s rejection of St. John, supported by Diana, alludes to the conclusion that a woman’s agency is more valuable than marriage as an objective to be achieved at any cost. More able to mark out her boundaries, the knowledge Jane gains of herself over the course of these exchanges allows her to embark on marriage to Rochester on an equal footing. In terms of her *Bildungsroman*, the progress Jane makes through these female intellectual communities is monumental in comparison with the protagonists of the other novels. None of the other heroines is given the opportunity to benefit from this type of encouragement from sympathetic members the same sex who offer recourse in times of crisis and complement a keen mind. Brontë leads the reader to acknowledge the potency of the like-minded female community by positing it as the linchpin of the success of Jane’s *Bildungsroman*.

The relationships discussed in this chapter demonstrate the significance of socialisation as part of the education process. Through the influence of parents

and guardians, a class-driven society anchored by the patriarchy is presented as a force to be overcome, rather than a welcoming conclusion to a process of development. The guidance imparted by these figures in *Jane Eyre*, *Valentine* and *Madame Bovary* is utilitarian in so far as it reinforces the class and gender hierarchies on which nineteenth-century English and French societies were based. It is not motivated by benevolence, but by egotism and a particular concern for status, which renders it comparable to the formal establishments discussed in Chapter One. Although the example set by Sue's parents sets her on course to reject the status quo as represented by the institution of marriage, the effect of their absence is to isolate her, leaving her devoid of guidance. In contrast, père Rouault and the comtesse and marquise de Raimbault pave the way for the marriages of Emma and Valentine to rid themselves of financial or moral responsibilities towards them. This unites them with Mrs Reed; they use established social customs to their benefit, as their concern is for their own class and comfort as opposed to the well-being of their charges.

It is through such characters that social obstacles facing women are highlighted to the reader, leading to a comprehension of the type of arguments that were being expressed by then-contemporary campaigners for women's rights. One such advocate was Catherine Barnby, who stated in 1843, 'custom and prejudice are the tyrants that must be overcome'. (*cited in* Taylor 2016: 390) The female communities in *Jane Eyre* serve this very function, guiding the subversive development of Jane's intellect, self-knowledge and confidence in her principles which allow her to reject convention and prioritise her desires. Having undergone this fruitful development, aided by her peers, she is the only protagonist whose *Bildung* culminates in the happy socialisation envisaged by Moretti. Aware of the perils of unconventionality, but unable to conform, the other heroines, including

Louise, fall victim to the social hostility from which Wilhelm Meister is exempt, leading to a circular course of *Bildung* culminating in death or self-renunciation.

Chapter Five: Romantic Relationships, Marriage and the Trajectory of Female Bildung

The circular course of *Bildung* experienced by Valentine, Emma and Sue can be largely attributed to their having embarked on marriage before they reach a level of self-knowledge comparable to that which is achieved by Jane. 'Early marriages are [...] a stop to improvement', argued Mary Wollstonecraft in 1787. (93) She was of the opinion that time for reflection and maturity was required before such decisions could be made, particularly where education or experience were lacking: 'but how can this happen when they are forced to act before they have had time to think, or find that they are unhappily married?' (94) This argument appears to resonate with the authors of the female protagonists under discussion, but does not prove problematic for Wilhelm Meister, whose errors are numerous, yet none irreparable, as he finds himself in an environment that ultimately accepts him for his faults.

In his discussion of the German *Bildungsroman*, Michael Minden claims that whatever course of discovery *Bildung* takes, 'the destination is always home', suggesting that there is an element of circularity even within the traditional model. (Minden 1997: 1) There is, indeed, a figurative 'return home' in *Wilhelm Meister*, but this lies in the answering of questions from his past rather than the loss of his agency. A notable example is the revelation towards the end of the novel that his first love never betrayed him as he had assumed; she was, in fact, pregnant with his child and died waiting vainly for his return. This reversion to the beginning develops Wilhelm's understanding of himself through knowledge of his past, permitting him to continue his venture in a less naive, if less jovial manner than

before. His error does not define him: he is still free to follow the path he carves out for himself, including his new-found role as father.

The communities in which the heroines of these novels find themselves are not so lenient, however. Susan J. Rosowski argues that the female protagonists' equivalent of the *Bildungsroman* involves 'an awakening to limitations', given that the completion of female *Bildung* as a 'happy' socialisation process is a rare phenomenon. (Rosowski 1983: 49) In the absence of a 'friendly social community', the heroines must come to terms with the impossibility of comfortable integration as part of their development. (Abel, Hirsch and Langland 1983: 6) Rosowski describes this as a journey of growing alienation: it is a movement inward 'toward greater and greater self-knowledge that leads in turn to a revelation of the disparity between that self-knowledge and the nature of the world'. (49) It is this discovery that motivates Emma to commit suicide and Sue to resort to self-abnegation. The circularity in *Valentine* is derived from the conventions of marriage and class, a combination of which eventually leads to a case of mistaken identity that results in the deaths of both Valentine and Bénédict. Jane, on the other hand, is able to use the self-knowledge she has developed to end her *Bildungsroman* on equal terms with Rochester, although this socialisation is not without compromise.

Romantic relationships are an imperative element in the development of the individual on the path to self-knowledge, not least for the female protagonist for whom an ill-matched marriage can end in the destruction of *Bildung*. According to Jerome Hamilton Buckley, the traditional male *Bildungsroman*

involves at least two love affairs or sexual encounters, one debasing, one exalting, and demands that in this respect and others the hero reappraise his values. By the time he has decided, after painful soul-searching, the sort of

accommodation to the modern world he can honestly make, he has left his adolescence behind and entered upon his maturity. (1974: 17-18)

The romantic journey forms an integral part of the hero's education and, following the connection made by Buckley, the emotions aroused by these love affairs act as a catalyst for reflection and self-knowledge, elucidating the route through which he might both insert and assert himself as an individual into society. That one of these romantic encounters might be 'debasing' and one 'exalting' indicates the space within the male *Bildungsroman* for trial and error in the romantic stakes before he can really know and master himself. Notably, Buckley makes no reference to the 'exalting' relationship culminating in marriage here, and indeed, Wilhelm Meister ends his apprenticeship outside the limits of both chastity and wedlock. The quest for self-knowledge through romantic and sexual experimentation aims for more than the objective of marriage as the ultimate acceptance into society for the male protagonist.

Theoretically, the inclusion of sexual expression within *Bildung* was barred to the female protagonist. '[W]hile the young men typically experience a series of sexual adventures on the way to marriage that marks the beginning of a public career', argues Todd Kontje, 'the women remain virgins until they find their Mr Darcy in a plotline [*sic.*] that leads to a happy ending of the novel and also the end of any career ambitions'. (2019: 14) Although this assessment is true of *Pride and Prejudice*, the authors of the novels under study centralise desire as an integral aspect of female development that cannot necessarily be contained by marriage. This revelation contradicts authoritative scientific voices such as that of scientist, William Acton, whose writings justified the negation of female sexuality: 'the majority of women (happily for them) are not very much troubled by sexual feeling

of any kind'. (1862: 101) On the contrary, the heroines under examination find expression or repression of desire to be a particularly troubling element of their development.

Susan Fraiman estimates that 'the female protagonist's progress, at least until the twentieth century, is generally contingent on avoiding the abyss of extramarital sexuality, on successfully preventing "things" from happening to her'. (1993: 7) The veracity of this is proven by Sand, who uses the same image of the 'abîme' to describe Valentine's realisation that her desire might be on the brink of jeopardising her virtue. (1856: 61) She has already seen living proof of the results of such liaisons through Louise and the image of the bottomless chasm signifies the irrevocable and potentially life-threatening consequences of an extramarital affair for a woman. The prevalence of the agency found in the traditional model is effaced by the potential dangers of sexual exploration that the female protagonist encounters. It is not the absence of female desire, but the double standard that renders the preservation of virtue, or rather, the positive judgements of others, more valuable to her. As Fraiman puts it, '[h]er paradoxical task is to see the world while avoiding violation by the world's gaze'. (1993: 7) Sexual experimentation was clearly the preserve of men in the nineteenth century, whilst women were harshly judged and ostracised for similar actions.

It is arguable, however, that in the novels under study, each female protagonist does in fact experience one 'debasing' and one 'exalting' relationship despite the associated perils. With the exception of *Jane Eyre*, it is not the 'exalting' example that culminates in marriage, nor does the marriage take place as a satisfying or expected conclusion to the novels. As such, Sand, Flaubert and Hardy raise doubts as to whether marriage is truly at the core of female fulfilment. In these cases, it is the marriage that constitutes the 'debasing' relationship

through which the protagonists gain further knowledge of themselves and their position in society, although this is not always a conscious realisation. They are not granted the same process of trial and error that benefits the hero of the male *Bildungsroman* or their male counterparts in their own narratives. Whether they are consummated or not, both the 'exalting' and 'debasing' relationships play a vital part in the heroine's consideration of 'the sort of accommodation to the modern world [s]he can honestly make'. (Buckley 1974: 17) Buckley's use of the word 'honestly' implies there is yet more freedom for the male protagonist in his accommodation to a world that is willing to overlook male errors. The inference is that his assimilation into the social whole can be comfortable, regardless of his shortfalls. Such allowances, however, are not so readily available to the female protagonist, intensifying her emotional education and complicating her perception of marriage.

Intellectual compatibility is the distinctive trait of the 'exalting' relationships in all four novels, not least in the female communities in *Jane Eyre* explored in the previous chapter. Although Fraiman's argument that 'when the mentor is a husband', apprenticeship under his guidance 'never leads the heroine to mastery' is valid, it is also true that the women in question seek intellectual inspiration from their lovers, whether this be through academic knowledge in the case of Jane and Sue, or common sympathies in the case of Emma and Valentine. (1993: 6) The authors present the intellect as a force that can equalise disparities of class and gender between individuals, which casts aspersions on the intolerance of broader society, represented by parents, guardians and institutions of formal education, which often renders such relationships impossible.

5.1 Intellectual Connections and Sympathies of Temperament

Rochester enters the narrative of *Jane Eyre* following Jane's articulation of a growing yearning for 'more intercourse with [her] kind' within the 'smooth career' she has begun to experience at Thornfield. (2000: 109, 108) Her situation does not deprive her physically and she has access to a certain amount of resources through which to exercise her intellect, placing her at a marked advantage to the many nigh on poverty-stricken governesses referred to by Josephine Butler. Rather than resign herself to this safe, if inane comfort, however, she dreams of further fulfilment, the opportunity to exercise her social and intellectual muscles with those who might aid her to 'overpass that limit' imposed by Thornfield and her employment. (2000: 109) Although the company she keeps there is pleasant, Jane does not withhold disclosure of her under-stimulation.

Jane is conscious of her need for intellectual stimulation from her peers after having experienced such a connection with Miss Temple and Helen. But, just as she, in Josephine Butler's words, 'strains the eyes for light' searching for stimulation in her social circle, Rochester enters on horseback. (Butler 2001: 73) He does not immediately enchant her, nor sweep her off her feet, however; Brontë ensures that he is first knocked from his horse and consequently, his masculine pedestal. To quote Gilbert and Gubar, he enters as 'the very essence of patriarchal energy' which is almost immediately flawed (and floored), demonstrating that 'the master's mastery is not universal'. (1979: 351, 352) He requires Jane to come to *his* rescue in a turn of events that subverts the expectations of the fairytales of Jane's childhood. As Rowe states, playing 'the angelic rescuer rather than distraught maiden' in a scenario that showcases Rochester's weakness goes some way to equalising their relationship before they become aware of their respective roles as master and servant. (Rowe 1983: 78)

Brontë employs the intellect as an equalising force, permitting the characters to establish a form of play that enables Jane to assert herself outside the boundaries of her work as governess. She is liberated from the obligation of politeness to her employer by Rochester's 'harsh caprice', the unconventionality of which she finds appealing: 'the eccentricity of the proceeding was piquant: I felt interested to see how he would go on'. (120) Brontë highlights the intellectual attraction, drawing a marked contrast between the 'piquancy' and 'interest' sparked by Rochester and the dread of the 'return to stagnation' upon re-entrance to Thornfield after their meeting in the lane. (116) The tone established, Jane is able to reply to Rochester's questions sincerely, throwing off the veil of convention; she asserts herself beyond its constraints, countering Rochester's expectations of a girl with her background in the process.

These early conversations prove the 'singular[ity]' of Jane's intellect and temperament, which subvert Rochester's assumptions. (131) This relationship provides an example of Margaret Mills's statement that '[e]ducation can act as a catalyst for unconventional relationships'. (Mills 2018: 76) Their equality of intelligence allows for discussion of art (Jane's paintings), music and literature, but it also paves the way for the development of their own language founded on witty repartee. Their unique wavelength is unintelligible to others, causing Mrs Fairfax to 'drop[] her knitting [...] wondering what sort of talk this was'. (122) The unconventionality of their discourse substantiates Mills's suggestion that education 'allows the most repressed or oppressed to move beyond the normal limits of propriety'. (2018: 76) Jane's intellect, honed by education, enables her to establish herself as her master's equal in a subversion of the class and gender hierarchies that underpin Rochester's privilege.

Brontë addresses the subject of equality directly through Jane's resistance to Rochester's demands. Despite the disparity of their stations, Jane refuses to acquiesce to Rochester's whimsical orders that do not pertain to her employment. Although he assures her that he does not 'wish to treat [her] like an inferior', he pushes for her assent that the grounds on which he might claim authority are legitimate:

do you agree with me that I have a right to be a little masterful, abrupt; perhaps exacting, sometimes, on the grounds I stated: namely, that I am old enough to be your father, and that I have battled through a varied experience of men of many nations, and roamed over half the globe while you have lived quietly with one set of people in one house? (133)

He attempts to validate his assumed superiority by asserting the privileges enjoyed by male members of the aristocracy — the very assets that have allowed him to explore the public and global spheres while Jane, as a woman, has been confined to the private. Jane does not concur to satisfy his ego or cast herself in a favourable light, but instead disagrees with the criteria Rochester has laid out for her subjection: "I don't think, sir, you have a right to command me, merely because you are older than I, or because you have seen more of the world than I have — your claim to superiority depends on the use you have made of your time and experience". (133-4) Applying her comment to a broader social context, it can be inferred that she does not believe that superiority should be awarded to men automatically, based solely on the luxuries life affords them. Her affiliation to justice leads her to the alternative conclusion that respect should be earned as a result of actions committed within the privileged sphere. Her contradiction

indicates a broader capacity for debate than Rochester's slight at her domestic situation gives her credit for, and her independence of thought renders her a worthy opponent in argument, a sport in which he clearly revels. It is through her readiness to oppose and refusal to submit that she reclaims the equality that he was about to deny her. Although Rochester does not agree with all of Jane's arguments here, he "mentally shakes hands" with her in demonstration of his respect. (134) Brontë manifests Jane's intellect as a tool of her survival, preventing her from the threat of male domination. In rising to Rochester's argument, she raises her own status, disproving his assumptions about her limitations; it is thus that they begin to meet minds in a way that transcends the barriers that separate them.

Similarly, Hardy leaves readers in no doubt that Sue's intelligence is on a par with her male companions, if not further advanced. She does not have to fight for equality in Jude's eyes in the same way that Jane gains Rochester's approval, but develops a relationship with him of a similarly intellectual nature. Hardy underlines their equal status through repeated reference to their similarities, a "two-in-oneness" that facilitates 'complete mutual understanding [...] ma[king] them almost two parts of a single whole'. (2016: 274, 237) It becomes apparent that Sue has learnt to suppress her sexuality in order to maintain intellectual and social freedoms, which explains her insistence upon navigating her relationship with Jude through intellectual debate about social mores. Her ability to manipulate men through argument allows her to claim her place as equal in her personal relationships before she can be treated as anything less.

Jude certainly constitutes the 'exalting' relationship in Sue's process of *Bildung*, but even her 'debasing' relationship with Phillotson and her cohabitation with the Christminster scholar are driven by her quest to develop and assert

herself through her intellect. As Penny Boumelha agrees, the education of Sue's emotions is inseparable from her acquisition of knowledge and the cultivation of her ideas as her 'intellectual education through the novel runs alongside her emotional involvements' with men. (2000: 64) For Sue, the sexual implications of male/female relationships undermine the cerebral union she wishes to maintain, which comes to shape her resistant attitude towards marriage. For the men in the novel, however, intellectual connection is presented by Hardy as inextricable from desire. Phillotson's attraction to Sue develops while she is under his tutelage and Jude convinces himself that his own designs on her consist of 'a wish for intellectual sympathy', when in fact his desires are more carnal: 'he went on adoring her, fearing to realise that it was human perversity'. (2016: 83) As for the Christminster scholar, who aided Sue's literary education, Sue insisted on perpetuating a platonic relationship in order to maintain equality through their intellectual connection. On two occasions in quick succession, Sue seizes equality by denying sexual difference between herself and the scholar, claiming that she has "no fear of men, as such, nor of their books", having "mixed with them [...] as one of their own sex". (122) It is thus that she insists on conducting their relationship, interacting not as lovers but "like two men almost". (122)

When sexual difference is brought to the surface by male desire, Sue begins to fear her position as equal might be undermined. She refuses a more intimate relationship with the scholar, shifting the power balance in her favour: "I wasn't in love with him — and on my saying I should go away if he didn't agree to *my* plan, he did so." (122) She asserts her power over him in order to ensure that the relationship does not compromise the liberty she enjoys, allowing her to continue her intellectual journey without getting caught in what Jude calls the "devilish domestic gins and springes [that] noose and hold back those who want to

progress”’. (178) Despite Sue’s efforts to retain agency by resisting the ‘gins and springes’ of convention with the scholar, her mistaken marriage to Phillotson eventually results in a reversal of the progress that she had fought so hard to preserve. It is this that marks the turning point in her *Bildungsroman*.

Why does Sue agree to marry Phillotson when she resists partners far more compatible? Hardy’s narrator suggests that her experience lags behind the propulsion of her self-assertion. Hurt that Jude concealed his marriage, she attempts to re-assert herself in their relationship with a gesture that she knows will inflict pain comparable to her own: ‘Could it be that Sue had acted with such unusual foolishness as to plunge into she knew not what for the sake of asserting her independence of [Jude], of retaliating on him for his secrecy?’ (145) Ironically, it is through self-assertion in a union that she holds dear that she embarks on a relationship that debases her with life-long consequences. She admits to Jude later that she “‘had never thought out fully what marriage meant’” and that she had thought herself “‘very experienced’” when making the decision. (176) The reality of her naivety on the subject of gender relations can be gauged from her assumption that a man never acts on his desires unless a woman “‘says by a look ‘Come on’” — an assumption that will strike a chord with readers of *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* (1891) in particular. (122)

Hardy’s sympathy for women who find themselves hindered by decisions made in want of experience is suggested after Sue’s wedding: ‘Perhaps Sue was thus venturesome with men because she was childishly ignorant of that side of their nature which wore out women’s hearts and lives’. (145) She chases mastery over men through rebellious speech and action, but does not pause to take stock of the ubiquity of social convention, already judging that she has advanced beyond the social teachings given to her sex; it is thus that she falls into the very trap of

premature marriage that Wollstonecraft warns against. Through the presentation of this error committed in youthful ignorance, Hardy's text makes the case for female access to the trial and error that is permitted in the male process of *Bildung*, which justifies Sue's claim that "one ought to be allowed to undo what one has done so ignorantly!" (176) Hardy presents a woman who has always striven to preserve her status as an individual amongst men, desperately crying out for a means of regaining autonomy in order that she might learn from her mistakes and recover control of her trajectory. It is through her relationships with men that she exercises the dominant aspects of her character and, in particular, that which Robert B. Heilman refers to as her 'impulse for power'. (Heilman 1966: 311) Conversely, these relationships also shed light on the parts of herself and of society where she lacks a comprehensive understanding, thereby jeopardising the process of *Bildung* that she has spent her life cultivating.

Emma Bovary experiences a similar awakening after her marriage to Charles, an arrangement which, as discussed previously, Charles negotiated with her father. Novels led Emma to believe that marriage would be the key to her emotional education, but almost as soon as the wedding ceremony is over, Flaubert portrays this decision as a mistake: 'le bonheur qui aurait dû résulter de cet amour n'étant pas venu, il fallait qu'elle se fût trompée'. (84) The reader anticipates the disappointment that awaits Emma in her marriage as a result of Flaubert's depiction of Charles in the first chapter. His mediocre intellect and the weakness of his constitution present him as no match for Emma, who wishes to immerse herself in the luxuries and passions available to men who have had the privilege of studying a reputable profession whilst absorbing the culture of the town. Flaubert's presentation of the disparity between Charles and Emma leads the reader to sympathise with the fact that 'un détachement intérieur se faisait qui

la déliait de lui'. (92) As Jacqueline Merriam Paskow states, Emma 'married Charles because her excitement in anticipating that which lay encoded in the word "amour" had made her believe she was in love with him', but this code encompasses more than just emotions. (2005: 329) For Emma, 'amour' is a rite of passage that should unlock access to a public sphere and thus, a social education as well as an emotional one. She craves a companion who will advance her course of *Bildung*, but it is impossible for Charles to live up to her expectations.

When studying medicine in Rouen, surrounded by the culture of the town, it did not occur to him to take advantage of the opportunities society affords his sex, leaving him with no experience with which to school or excite Emma: 'Il n'avait jamais été curieux, disait-il, [...] d'aller voir au théâtre les acteurs de Paris'. (92) Charles's attitude towards culture is gauche, striking a bitterness in Emma that he wasted the opportunities available to him, leaving him with little to offer her. In Emma's eyes, Charles fails at being a man on these grounds: U]n homme, au contraire, ne devait-il pas tout connaître, exceller en des activités multiples, vous initier aux énergies de la passion, aux raffinements de la vie, à tous les mystères?' (92) Elsie M. Wiedner argues that in *Madame Bovary*, '[i]f masculinity is seen as the power freely to complete an action, all the men are failures', which certainly rings true of Charles. (1978: 58) Devoid of curiosity, he is happy to remain within the realms of a restricted and comfortable milieu. Flaubert portrays Charles as far more suitable for the role of wife than Emma, thereby inverting customary gender stereotypes and implying a criticism of the opportunities available to women. Pedestrian in his desires and ambitions, Charles does not imagine that Emma could want anything more than he offers her. The 'debasing' nature of the marriage is confirmed when Emma arrives at the stark realisation of her error: 'Pourquoi, mon Dieu! me suis-je mariée?' (96)

It is thus that Flaubert encourages the reader to understand Emma's resort to reverie and hypothesis: 'ces événements non survenus, cette vie différente, ce mari qu'elle ne connaissait pas'. (96) Her musings conjure the possibility that she might have achieved all her ambitions if only she had met a different man: 'Il aurait pu être beau, spirituel, distingué, attirant', or, indeed, anything that Charles is not. (96) Flaubert's use of the conditional perfect emphasises her lamentations, rendering her powerlessness over her destiny more evident. Unable to develop her relationship with society in the way that she imagined, she becomes increasingly insular, triggering a profound boredom. Flaubert juxtaposes the vibrant, active life of the towns with the silence and inaction of the emptiness that is expanding within: 'Mais elle, sa vie était froide comme un grenier dont la lucarne est au nord, et l'ennui, araignée silencieuse, filait sa toile dans l'ombre à tous les coins de son coeur'. (96) The spider metaphor conveys a gothic sense of foreboding; *ennui* is a menacing state of being which initially appears insignificant, but gathers potency when left unacknowledged, filling a once empty space with noxious web. Emma's speculation reflects her growing isolation, leading the reader to share in her disillusionment towards the outcome of her marriage; from her perspective, she is prevented from being able to unlock her full potential, and so, her course of *Bildung* is stalled. She fills the growing void with fantasy and romance to exercise her agency so that she might experience the products of her imagination independently of Charles.

Flaubert portrays Emma's diminishing health and capricious temperament as symptoms of the restrictions to which she is subject. The failure of women by established institutions is reiterated by Charles's collaboration with an 'ancient maître' to cure Emma's malady. Together, they diagnose her condition as 'une maladie nerveuse: on devait la changer d'air'. (122) Emma is the object of the

sentence, a medical subject being discussed by two male 'professionals' who reach a superficial verdict on her 'cure' without effort to understand the causes of her ailments. The dismissive attitude towards women represented by the medical profession contributes to her isolation, which is exacerbated by her lack of meaningful social contact at home. This is not for lack of trying on Emma's part, however; she tries talking to Charles in conversational terms about the trivia she encounters in her reading, the activity that constitutes her existence, but fails to elicit adequate responses. Flaubert describes Charles as 'enfin [...] quelqu'un, une oreille toujours ouverte, une approbation toujours prête', a two-dimensional character always ready with a platitude, but incapable of a dialogue of any substance. Although Flaubert portrays him as *at least* a receptive ear, he likens his contribution to that of Emma's pet dog and inanimate household objects, highlighting the extent to which his company is unsatisfactory: Elle faisait bien des confidences à sa levrette! Elle en eût fait aux bûches de la cheminée et au balancier de la pendule'. (116)

Regardless of his lack of comprehension, it is Charles who is responsible for arranging the 'change of air' that Emma is prescribed. He takes her complaints of Tostes at face value, concluding that 'la cause de sa maladie était sans doute dans quelque influence locale', but never reflecting on his own impact on proceedings. (122) His selection of Yonville confirms his ignorance. It is described as a 'contrée bâtarde où le langage est sans accentuation, comme le paysage sans caractère', a far cry from the cultural hub for which Emma yearns. (125) By exchanging one unyielding environment for another, he unwittingly directs Emma's *Bildung* towards another impasse. Victor Brombert's assertion that '[t]he very notion of emancipation is caught up with the notion of voyage' is applicable here, although Charles clearly does not view their *déménagement* in such terms. (1966:

60) While an individual's course of *Bildung* requires a departure from home in order for development to begin, Flaubert's construction of the landscape suggests that Emma's experience of living in Yonville will prove just as barren as the land upon which it is built. Home of 'les pires fromages de Neufchâtel de tout l'arrondissement', it cannot even suffice as a satisfactory agricultural area. Yonville is the antithesis of Emma's cultural aspirations. Its failure to progress in spite of its new outlets is comparable to Charles's attitude whilst in Rouen, blind to culture and opportunity beyond his immediate vicinity. The depiction of a town 'tout couché' conveys the unlikelihood of the arrival of the 'événement' that Emma awaits.

When Léon is introduced, Emma feels an immediate connection to him based on intellectual sympathies and mutual interests, which are absent in her marriage. They both delight in the emotions inspired by landscapes and demonstrate a shared aspiration towards the culture that Yonville lacks. Their similarities are also underscored by their reading, which they both use as a means of liberation by blurring fiction with reality. Léon's explanation of the feelings books arouse in him reflect Emma's own almost exactly: 'votre pensée se mêle aux personnages; il semble que c'est vous qui palpitez sous leurs costumes'. (140) Like Emma, he uses the characters as a means of acting out subconscious feelings which would otherwise remain dormant, and employs reading as a distraction therapy in the midst of banal provincial society: 'vivant ici, loin du monde, c'est ma seule distraction; mais Yonville offre si peu de ressources!' (141) The detachment between himself and his ambition hints at a feeling of isolation with which Emma can easily empathise. Such similarities render their connection comparable to the 'two-in-oneness' experienced by Jude and Sue, but Flaubert soon draws the reader's attention to the divergence in their prospects. When

questioned as to his familiarity with 'les Italiens', he allows Emma to glimpse his future: 'je les verrai l'année prochaine, quand j'irai habiter à Paris, pour finir mon droit'. (139) Léon's dreams are, in fact, not confined to the pages of books. Rather, his privilege permits him to realise his ambitions, not least Emma's dream of accessing Parisian culture, indicating the opportunities inherent in male *Bildung*. Flaubert uses the permanence of their situations to differentiate them; Léon's situation is a temporary hiatus before embarking on a path of action, whereas Emma's prospects are to remain continually bleak.

Jacqueline Merriam Paskow expresses scepticism towards the connections forged by Emma and Léon in this scene, claiming that they 'imperceptibly begin to read each other as stand-ins for poetic fictional models'. (2005: 329) According to her analysis, their readings of each other constitute a 'misidentification [that] is precisely what enables their initial, mutual attraction and eventually their so-called falling in love'. (2005: 329) However, the superficial interpretation of their connection as implied by Paskow does not take into account other aspects of Emma's experience as explored earlier. Through Flaubert's exploration of Emma's mental state and his use of *style indirect libre*, he encourages the reader to feel a sense of relief when she meets Léon, a kindred spirit who allows her temporary release from her marriage and the banality of her domestic existence. The 'centre fixe d'une sympathie commune' between Emma and Léon, which is entirely absent in both her marriage and her relationship with Rodolphe, renders this connection the most 'exalting' that Emma experiences. (142) If they do read each other as poetic stand-ins, they do so mutually, which establishes their relationship on an equal footing, unlike her affair with Rodolphe, which is based largely on manipulation. The intellectual sympathies that she encounters with Léon permit her an interlocutor who reciprocates in conversation, posing a marked contrast to

Charles's stock remarks and inane platitudes. Albeit in a less academic fashion than Jane or Sue, Flaubert allows Emma to assert herself in this relationship through exercise of her intellect and expression of her emotions. The connection Emma makes with Léon unites her with Sue, highlighting the need for a process of trial and error for women who embark on marriage from a position of ignorance. Through juxtaposition of Charles and Léon, Flaubert promotes the restorative effects of authentic self-expression and places the problem of the permanence of marriage under scrutiny.

Valentine's marriage also leads to her 'debasement' in Sand's novel. She does not fight against her engagement to Monsieur de Lansac, but at the same time, Sand conveys the inexperience of Valentine's heart. Unlike Emma, who believed herself in love with Charles to access the emotions of romance and passion as foretold for women in her novels, Valentine 'ne se croyait pas destinée à ces énergiques et violentes épreuves'. (Sand 1856: 11) She attributes her subdued state to her mentor figures, having witnessed the perilous consequences of their behaviour first hand.

She does not, therefore, immediately interrogate her sentiments towards Monsieur de Lansac in such a way as might reveal her lack of emotional attachment to him. Sand's method of introducing him into the narrative creates a first impression of his being considerate and chivalrous, pleasing not only to the comtesse in his respect for public customs, but also to Valentine through the liberation he allows her. He begins as a diplomat, exercising his professional skills within the private domain. At the May ball, for example, he acts as a moderator between his fiancée and her mother. To assuage his mother-in-law's concerns of propriety, he steps in to kiss Valentine before allowing Bénédict to take his place in the dance. He does not adhere so strictly to custom as to limit Valentine's

freedom, but equally leaves the comtesse 'satisfaite de la manière diplomatique dont son futur gendre avait arrangé l'affaire'. (10) He averts potential awkwardness and as such, he is initially characterised by his fairness and his ability to keep the peace.

Sand posits the notion that Lansac neutralises the restrictions imposed on Valentine by her mother. His mediation denotes an understanding of Valentine's situation, distinguishing him from the values of propriety assumed by his class — those which the comtesse desires to emulate to the letter. He appears to belittle the superfluous constraints imposed by the comtesse and to demonstrate a genuine concern for Valentine's comfort, indicating the sort of values he intends to carry into their marriage. The impression Sand creates, however, is misleading. By masquerading as an antidote to the comtesse's hysteria, he conceals his intentions to manipulate both mother and daughter in order to pay off his debts: 'pour rien au monde il n'eût voulu perdre la main et la fortune de Mademoiselle de Raimbault'. (19)

Lansac's dealings in the public sphere underpin his motives for a performance of sympathetic behaviour towards Valentine and her mother in the private; he lays the foundations for a solution to his excesses and waits for the moment that his plan can come to fruition — the moment that he, as Valentine's husband, can exercise rights of property over her, claiming ownership of her fortune and estate. He uses the skills of negotiation and diplomacy that he has developed in society to manipulate his fortune at the château, treating his relationship with Valentine and her mother as nothing more than the consolidation of a business deal. This is an abrupt departure from the impression Sand builds previously, misleading the reader so that they find themselves victim to the same manipulation to which Valentine is subject.

Sand depicts a situation in which the young female has little chance of self-preservation, as the mild qualities that society praises in women leave her vulnerable to degradation by men of the world such as Lansac. In undercutting her original depiction of Lansac as a calm and respectful mediator, Sand misdirects both Valentine and the reader simultaneously. Through her construction of Lansac's manipulation, she demonstrates the facility with which men can trick women in such situations where they are guided solely by biased parental advice predicated on society's expectations of women and the class system. By deluding readers in this way, Sand enlists their sympathies towards her heroine; although Valentine is good and honest, she is vulnerable and the permanence of the forthcoming marriage to Lansac threatens to trap her in a relationship which can never be equal because it is duplicitous. Although Lansac pretends liberation from the prejudices of his class, in reality, he uses the situation to his advantage to secure his status. As Sand unfolds this process of entrapment, she develops a case for a process of trial and error to be awarded to the female character whose innocence allows her to be manoeuvred into a 'debasing' match cemented on false and unjust pretences.

As previously stated, it transpires that Valentine's respect for Lansac is not accompanied by any passionate feelings which might constitute education of a romantic nature. This is not least because he is a product of the conventions of his class, relying on superficial romantic tropes to create the image of a lover whilst distancing himself from any authentic feelings of love. Sand makes clear that the reserve in Valentine's emotions is largely due to the restrictions she is bound by in her upbringing: 'Élevée sous des regards si rigides, dans une atmosphère d'usages si froids et si guindés, elle avait si peu joui de la fraîcheur et de la poésie de son âge'. (20) The customs of the aristocracy are directly criticised for stifling

Valentine's enjoyment of her youth and hindering the emotional development that accompanies these formative experiences. While Sand emphasises Valentine's natural virtue, she suggests that Valentine is not immune to excitement and adventure in spite of the emotional reserve that she has cultivated as a means of self-protection: 'sa jeune tête ne se défendait point d'aimer tout ce qui ressemblait à une aventure'. (20) The restrictions placed upon her and the resulting coping mechanisms that she has constructed oppose her natural inclinations; she desires action and freedom outside the parameters of her mother's censorship. She has never been in a position conducive to the cultivation of romantic feelings as her environments and acquaintances, including her engagement to Lansac, have been curated by the comtesse, whose artificial stipulations oppose Valentine's true nature.

In contrast to Valentine's assumptions of herself, '[elle] était assez romanesque; elle ne pensait pas l'être parce que son coeur vierge n'avait pas encore conçu l'amour'. (20) She cannot master herself on the same level as Jane because she is not fully acquainted with all the facets of her identity. This exposition of Valentine's emotional state coincides with the appearance of Bénédict traversing her garden in his 'costume rustique', singing 'son chant, assez flatteur et assez puissant', distinguishing himself from everything the château and its occupants represent. (20) He conveys in his gait a liberation barely conceived of by Valentine, not least because he indulges himself in the pleasure of song, a practice relinquished by Valentine despite her delight in music. He walks in a manner 'légère et assurée', paying no heed to the intimidation the château is intended to inspire in the lower ranks. (20) He is free from the inhibitions that have defined Valentine's existence and as such, the reader is encouraged to understand that such an affiliation would liberate Valentine on multiple counts.

The ensuing relationship between them is based on intellectual sympathies and freedoms which negate the prevalent attitudes of Valentine's upbringing and the conduct exhibited by Lansac. When Bénédict meets her in the woods, away from the pressures of convention, he is pleasantly surprised to find that she has not inherited the prejudices of wealth as he expected: 'Il trouva qu'elle était fille noble et de bonne foi, sans morgue et sans fausse humilité'. (13) A release from convention facilitates the formation of new, mutually beneficial connections which have the effect of liberating members of both classes from the bonds that restrict them. This implies that the perceived differences between ranks are, in fact, arbitrary. By breaking down the social barriers that separate them, Sand reveals the similarity of their outlooks, which allows them to form their relationship on an equal foundation.

This is particularly evident when Valentine is able to escape the château to spend the afternoon with the Lhérys and Louise. Sand states in no uncertain terms, '[j]amais Valentine ne s'était sentie si heureuse' in escaping her environment and seizing the opportunity to exist temporarily 'loin des regards de sa mère, loin de la froideur glaciale qui pesait sur tous ses pas'. (27) Evading convention, Valentine is able to socialise as her authentic self without being governed by artifice. For the first time, she is liberated to the extent that she can 'vivre de toute sa vie'. (27) Sand implies that Valentine's usual surroundings necessitate that she live a fragmented version of her true identity, having only experienced a fraction of the life that lies beyond the horizon of the château. She relishes the activity of the bourgeois lifestyle and the opportunity to reap the benefits of nature without requiring pretence.

It is this natural setting that Sand selects for Valentine's sexual awakening, subconscious though it is, as the possibility does not occur to her that 'un

sentiment mortel à ces devoirs pût naître en elle'. (29) Sand makes the comparison between Bénédict and Lansac explicit through Valentine's reverie, leading her to conclude that 'une immense différence' distinguishes the two men. (29) Both are defined by the freedoms and privileges of their sex and respective classes: for Lansac, these include access to capital, respect and the ability to obtain influence in the public sphere, but in contrast, Bénédict's freedom of mind and body allow him to think and act untrammelled. His passions are complemented by his affinity to nature, a phenomenon to which Valentine has already attached significant value based on the liberation it offers her. In the midst of this unrestrained natural environment she compares the two men, almost as if the river grants her new license to follow the free course of her thoughts and clarify her judgements. Although Bénédict is not considered handsome by the standards of either class, his rugged countenance and his strong body display 'la force, la hardiesse et la grâce rustique du paysan', which elevate him in Valentine's estimation. (28) His mind is refined by his education, but his physique has retained its inherent power. She notices that he is happy to simply exist in nature, with none of the airs and graces she would expect from those of her own class. It is in this context that Bénédict firmly establishes himself as a man in Valentine's eyes, triggering a visceral attraction that is absent in her observations of Lansac: 'Bénédict alors était un homme; un homme des champs et de la nature, un homme dont la mâle poitrine pouvait palpiter d'un amour violent'. (29) He inspires the passion of which she considered herself incapable previously.

The contrast between the two men casts her fiancé in a particularly unfavourable light. While he is described as 'régulièrement beau', he ensures his own perfection to such a degree that his handsomeness loses its appeal, as it is curated in the same way as his conduct. Sand makes evident that Valentine is not

attracted to the superficiality that Lansac exudes, despite his impeccable exterior. The problem lies in the fact that he has no discernible personal merit: 'il ne possédait pas une volonté individuelle, et [...] son cerveau ne renfermait que les niaiseries solennelles de la diplomatie'. (29) There is no substance nor liberation to his character which offer to free Valentine from the upbringing she resents; the prospect of marriage to him would simply trap her within the principles that already limit her. Similarly, in the romantic stakes, he proves himself to be no worthy opponent to Bénédict. Whereas Bénédict is portrayed as the epitome of virility, Lansac is 'un homme sans passion généreuse, sans jeunesse morale', in whom Valentine 'n'avait jamais aperçu l'homme'. (29) The narrator confirms that which is already starkly apparent to the reader: Lansac 'ne lui inspirait rien'. (29)

Bénédict, on the other hand, offers liberation from the conventional life she abhors and acts as a catalyst for feelings she had previously believed lay outside the scope of her potential experiences. Sand depicts the potency of Valentine's sexuality through her physical reaction to Bénédict, a response that she cannot fully comprehend as she is experiencing it for the first time: 'Dans cet air vif son sang commençait à s'éveiller [...] elle sentit comme une ardeur étrange monter de son coeur à son front'. (29) Her impulses are stimulated in a natural environment which accommodates the desires of the individual. Sand's juxtaposition of the effects of nature and artifice renders it impossible for the reader to maintain their initial support of Lansac. She asserts the importance of female sexuality within an initiation to love and demonstrates that 'exalting' relationships are derived from sexual and social liberation. Reciprocal passion and sympathies of intellect are presented as potent forces which challenge the artifice of class and oppose the status quo.

From this examination of the 'exalting' relationships in these novels, intellectual connections, mutual interests and sympathies of temperament are tools employed by the novelists to destabilise the restrictions imposed by class and gender hierarchies. The result is the establishment of, or the potential for, equalised relationships through which the female protagonists can express themselves authentically outside the limits of social convention. The insinuation is that should these relationships be given the freedom to flourish, they would be beneficial for men and women alike. In *Jude the Obscure*, *Valentine* and *Madame Bovary*, the authors present premature marriages as a significant obstruction to female *Bildung*. 'Debasing' contracts undertaken from a position of naivety or coercion do not permit the unfolding of female desire, principles or potential that might eventually constitute the self-knowledge developed by Jane; it is thus that the authors present the case for a female process of trial and error that allows for mistakes to be learnt from and for development to continue. Jane, aided by her reading and the support she gains from female communities, does not marry prematurely, but develops her own process of trial and error outside the institution of marriage. Her romantic relationships add to the progression of her *Bildung* by awakening her desire and solidifying her principles, enabling her to explore her potential more fully. Unwilling to compromise on these points, nor her self-respect, she rejects roles that force her submission, allowing her to eventually embark on marriage from a position of comparative parity. Her linear development is not without its setbacks, however, indicating Brontë's acknowledgement of the pitfalls to which women, like those in the other novels, fall victim.

5.2 Progression and Regression: Trajectories and Outcomes of Female Bildung

Jane's linear course of *Bildung* associates *Jane Eyre* most closely with the development experienced by Wilhelm Meister. She experiences several versions of a 'return home', first to her Aunt Reed's house, second to Moor House where she is returned to her true kin, and third to Rochester at Thornfield where she finally absorbs herself into society through marriage on her own terms. At each of these stages, Brontë depicts Jane as having become more contented and advanced than the last, attesting to her progress. Her path, however, is by no means smooth. As Minden states, 'the *Bildungsroman* makes the shortcomings of the individual — the very "false starts and wrong choices" of the dictionary definition of the genre — the driving force of its narratives'. (1997: 5) This is certainly true of *Jane Eyre*, as each time she is led towards the abyss of submission, she overhauls her outlook and changes her environment, adding to her experience of the world and her understanding of herself. In the other novels, however, the female protagonists are unable to fully recover their footing when they experience set-backs; their trajectories are compromised at the point at which their errors cannot be undone. For Sue, the 'return home' to Phillotson marks her conversion to convention, and in Emma's case, the impossibility of returning to a home she recognises leads to her suicide. For Valentine, the 'return home' can be understood more figuratively as the resurgence of the class-led behaviour that divides society, just at the point at which the reader imagines that she might be free of it. In each of these three instances, the circular course of *Bildung* is cemented primarily by marriage, class or a combination of the two.

The intellectual connection between Jane and Rochester paves the way to a relationship that is 'exalting' in that it deconstructs gender and class hierarchies to facilitate the equal marriage that concludes Jane's socialisation. As previously explored, however, Jane's equality is not freely given, but painstakingly fought for, even at the expense of her physical well-being. Brontë uses the figures of Rochester and St. John to aid Jane on the path towards self-knowledge and the consolidation of her principles. The actions of both men provide Jane with examples of the female role which she can contest, as they force her to evaluate herself on the basis of what she *is* by exemplifying that which she *is not* and cannot contentedly become. Brontë writes Jane as a character who values her integrity and sees her own worth in spite of what she is taught to believe about her gender and class. She avoids permanent debasement as either a mistress or a missionary's wife by opposing convention outside the institution of marriage. While Brontë does not criticise marriage directly, she depicts Jane as a woman who does not envisage wedlock as her only destiny and will not submit to it, nor the whims of men, on unfavourable terms. Her experimental course of *Bildung* is self-directed and she seizes her own right to trial and error in the pursuit of a situation where she is not cowed into dependency. Brontë ensures that Jane embarks on marriage from a foundation of equality and at a stage in her development where she is fully cognisant of the significance of her actions.

Jane's naivety on the subject of men and worldly experience at the beginning of the novel initially creates an imbalance between herself and Rochester on which he is quick to capitalise. Having stated that he "find[s] it impossible to be conventional with [her]", he insinuates that a friendship with him might free her from social customs, which would consequently coax her out of herself and enable her to experience a fuller version of her potential than her

“Lowood constraint” permits. (2000: 138) He describes the effect of this freer, unconventional relationship in terms of her liberation: “I see, at intervals, the glance of a curious sort of bird through the close-set bars of a cage: a vivid, restless, resolute captive is there; were it but free, it would soar cloud-high”. (138) He implies that he views her current state as one of enslavement to form, the bonds of which could be broken by his creation of a situation in which custom is overthrown, however, his vision permits him to assume superiority over her as the initiator of her liberation. In her employment of the bird metaphor, Brontë conveys the sense that he exerts his power by patronising Jane whilst singing the virtues of the absence of a power imbalance. The bird is necessarily inferior to the captor who has the power to open the cage and facilitate flight. As Jane has already opposed Rochester’s overt assumption of superiority based on his age and experience, this speech can be read as a more insidious attempt to underpin his authority under the pretence of aiding the personal progress he knows Jane strives towards.

On the one hand, Jane broadens her horizons by means of the experience that Rochester has gained from his privilege, much in the way that Sue benefits from her relationship with the Christminster scholar. She realises that he can induct her into a wealth of knowledge that lies outside her remit and provide her with a form of intellectual companionship that she has experienced only fleetingly. On the other, however, the development of her romantic feelings leads her to a willingness to overlook his faults: ‘I believed he was naturally a man of better tendencies, higher principles, and purer tastes than such as circumstances had developed’. (146) Brontë’s insistence upon Jane’s ‘beliefs’ indicate that Jane, in her newfound delight in stimulating company, is vulnerable to being misled by Rochester’s narrative. It is important to remember that Rochester, in his liaisons

abroad with Bertha and Céline Varens, was exercising his sexual freedoms consciously; he was not so much a victim of circumstance as he claims. In her ignorance, Jane risks the same fate as Emma, Sue and Valentine, who stand united in their innocence that prevents them from fully understanding the intentions of men and the implications of marriage.

Notwithstanding Rochester's capacity to enlighten Jane, he assigns himself the task of awakening the romantic channels within her, through which he aims to satisfy his designs. He already finds her a receptive pupil who 'talked comparatively little; but [...] heard him talk with relish', and thus the refuted hierarchy is re-established and sexual dominance reaffirmed. Jane as the pupil and listener becomes more passive in her learning than she was in her self-directed study, relinquishing a substantial amount of the agency and independence that she had cultivated previously. This is an example of the 'male/female instructor/disciple dyad', which functions on the basis of female 'receptivity, not active discovery', removing Jane from the self-sufficiency that governed her in her childhood. (Green 2001: 36, 35) Noting Jane's sympathetic responses to the abridged tales of his sexual exploits, Rochester muses aloud on her comparative lack of emotional experience: "You never felt jealousy, did you, Miss Eyre? Of course not: I need not ask you because you have never felt love. You have both sentiments yet to experience". (141) As Gilbert and Gubar argue, their romantic and sexual knowledge is disproportionate, which once again upsets the equality of their relationship: 'Rochester has specific and "guilty" sexual knowledge which makes him in some sense her "superior"'. (1979: 354) His rhetoric proves his awareness of the imbalance and as such, his schemes to manipulate her through his courtship with Blanche Ingram and his fortune-teller disguise come across as

particularly dishonest and unnecessary, highlighting another disparity in their principles.

To return to Laura Morgan Green's argument, the insistence upon male dominance in what she calls the 'instruction/seduction' context, is not a fixed power dynamic. (2001: 36) She writes: 'the erotics of pedagogy depend on a shifting power dynamic in which the female intermittently displays her capacity for resistance and evaluation'. (2001: 36) While this argument holds weight, it does not reflect the extent of the strength and self-assertion with which Brontë endows Jane at pivotal moments in the narrative where there is the threat of future compromise. In the knowledge that she would have to forsake their bond if Rochester were to marry Blanche, Jane rails against his proposal that she should remain his governess, taking ownership of the feelings she had hitherto concealed: "Do you think, because I am poor, obscure, plain, and little, I am soulless and heartless?" (2000: 253) She claims her humanity before him, refusing to be treated as his inferior according to the criteria by which society controls women. The avowal of her feelings forms a powerful speech; her admission of love renders her vulnerable, but not weak, and she demands his respect in return. She does not allow her passion to subjugate her worth and insists that he regard her not through an artificial social lens, but as his equal: "I am not talking to you through the medium of custom, conventionalities [...] — it is my spirit that addresses your spirit [...] equal — as we are!" (253)

This is not just a speech about Jane's personal experience, but Brontë's rousing rebellion against discrimination. For a second time, he employs avian imagery, on this occasion to calm her rebellion and regain control of her in an attempt to shift the power balance in his favour: "be still; don't struggle so, like a wild, frantic bird that is rending its own plumage in its desperation". (253) Whereas

previously, the bird metaphor was used to belittle Jane's repression, here Rochester contradicts himself through his implication that Jane's passions have rendered her savage. His language encourages her to submit to control, discrediting the spirit that fuels her discourse. His response to her speech diverges from the reader's; while Brontë leads the reader to support Jane in her mutiny, Rochester distorts the essence of her argument, failing to acknowledge her stand for independence. This time, however, Jane takes ownership of his metaphor, demonstrating at once the power of her rhetoric and her refusal to be conquered by the convention he had previously dismissed: "I am no bird; and no net ensnares me: I am a free human being with an independent will; which I now exert to leave you". (253) The repetition of the personal pronoun demonstrates an assertion of agency which constitutes a negation of patriarchal control. It is thus that Brontë permits Jane to regain her subjectivity and liberate herself from a debasing situation. Though Jane loves Rochester, she will not sacrifice herself to remain in his company at the cost of her integrity; she values her worth enough to challenge the established order.

The resistance Jane displays on this occasion is repeated in her rejection of Rochester's proposal that she should become his mistress. It becomes increasingly evident that patriarchal attitudes are ingrained in Rochester's conduct and that his outlook is orientated by the privileges society has allowed him by virtue of his wealth and gender, not least male property rights which extend to the objectification of women. Regardless of his past misgivings, he sees it as his right to pursue personal happiness by any means possible, exercising his freedom of movement and sexual liberties in order to do so. He tells Jane that in order to assuage previous errors, he had "roved about, living in one capital, then another", seeking his "ideal of a woman". (310-11) From his perspective, his unfortunate

marriage does not damage his integral worth, but in fact gives him license to seek the happiness of which he has been deprived by any means at his disposal: “it appeared to be so absolutely rational that I should be considered free to love and be loved”. (310) Rochester’s journey adheres to the traditional course of male *Bildung* which permits him the chance to rebound from his mistakes without social laws compromising his liberty. In his obsession with his own happiness, he does not consider that such a course would be impossible for Jane if she were to retain social dignity. He even demonstrates an awareness of the fate that befalls women who form sexual relationships outside marriage, but in his insularity, fails to apply the logic to the situation he proposes for Jane: “a mistress is the next worst thing to buying a slave: both are often by nature, and always by position, inferior”. (311) This hypocritical and ignorant discourse highlights the double standard, leading the reader to support Jane in her refusal to condone the transgression of what Rochester calls “a mere human law” that would hardly affect him, but would taint Jane irreversibly. (317)

Rochester uses every tool at his disposal to persuade Jane to surrender in a display of his own faltering integrity. Failing to plant seeds of self-doubt, he resorts to alienating her, aligning himself more explicitly to traditional views she had assumed were below him: ‘Who in the world cares for *you*? Or who will be injured by what you do?’ (317) Laura Morgan Green proposes that this is proof that Rochester assesses Jane ‘not by her worth as an individual’, but ‘by her place in familial and social structures’. (Green 2001: 39) His criticism of the inferiority of her connections causes a resurgence of the subjectivity she displayed previously, leaving the reader with the lasting impression of her agency: “*I* care for myself. The more solitary, the more friendless, the more unsustained I am, the more I will respect myself”. (2000: 317) Jane chooses dignified but uncertain independence

over financial security at the expense of her principles. It is her self-knowledge that gives her the courage to draw boundaries which prevent her from being exploited by the patriarchal attitudes exemplified by Rochester.

Brontë repeats Jane's resistance in her later relationship with St. John. The pilgrimage that leads her to Moor House constitutes a 'literal departure from society', deemed by Rita Felski to be the 'precondition for the attainment of a meaningful identity, which requires a radical rupture with the heroine's past history and with established modes of perception'. (1989: 142) The idea that Jane does not have 'a meaningful identity' at this stage in the narrative is too reductive, having witnessed the vivacity behind her rebellion and her already solid foundation of self-respect. However, her separation does, indeed, contribute to the course of her *Bildung*, adding to her experience in such a way that confirms the terms upon which she can adhere to her values in her integration into society, or rather, 'the sort of accommodation to the modern world [s]he can honestly make'. (Buckley 1974: 18) Jane's introduction to the world of Moor House comes after a period of physical privation, during which she faces the consequences that await women who have no means of supporting themselves. In comparison to the bleak alternative of destitution, the house is like a beacon of physical and intellectual hope at the end of the tunnel.

At first, St. John appears as a saviour, but she soon notices the flaws in his philanthropic façade. His countenance changes as he realises the force of Jane's unconventionality towards him: 'He had not imagined that a woman would dare speak so to a man'. (374) He represents orthodox views on female conduct, presenting Jane with an additional obstacle to overcome in the consolidation of her identity as an independent equal. He distances himself from the cordial familiarity that Jane had come to enjoy in favour of a more austere demeanour which

reinforces his place in the domestic hierarchy. He begins to control Jane even down to the course of her study, declaring that she should alter her attention from German to Hindostanee to suit the function he envisages for her: 'I never dared complain, because I saw that to murmur would be to vex him'. (396-7) Her agency is initially stifled under his regime which begins to resemble the dictatorships she rose up against in the past, indicating authorial acknowledgement that even the strongest of wills can falter under despotism. Despite his purported devotion to doing his duty by an 'infallible master', his true interests are self-directed; he abuses his religious affiliation to manipulate Jane through order of her 'duty'. (401) Susan Fraiman agrees that St. John is 'a churchman in the Brocklehurstian mold, anxious to raise himself up by keeping others down. His Christian rhetoric barely disguises his hierarchical views, and as a missionary he exports these around the world'. (1993: 16) Whilst he appreciates Jane's intellect, his intention to exploit it demonstrates that not even puissance of mind can persuade him that man and woman can co-exist on a level playing field.

The assessment that Jane is "formed for labour, not for love" consolidates St. John as Jane's 'debasing' suitor. (402) Her revolt is triggered once again when she is threatened by a man defining her according to his agenda, with permanent social consequences. As soon as he lays out his proposition, Jane feels her 'iron shroud contract[] round [her]' as she is metaphorically forced back into the cage of Rochester's imagery. (404) Seeing the prospect of her liberty disappear, she musters the courage with which to assert herself as St. John's equal, as she did with Rochester. She recognises that acceptance of St. John would equate to self-abnegation of a sort likely to culminate in her death — a situation which would devour her physically as well as mentally: "If I join St. John, I abandon half myself: if I go to India, I go to premature death". (404) Having experienced passion first

hand, she realises that a relationship without it would be to deprive herself of a natural human impulse. Their attitudes towards pleasure articulate the imbalance between them, as is also observed by Aleksander Stević: 'Whereas [St. John] works to squash desire even when it doesn't entail a serious moral conflict, Jane works to accommodate it if she possibly can'. (2020: 91) The austerity of his admission that he wants a wife as a "helpmeet [he] can influence entirely in life, and retain absolutely till death" underlines his utilitarian attitude towards marriage, leading Jane to realise the fallibility which finally enables her to resist him: 'I felt his imperfection, and took courage. I was with an equal — one with whom I might argue'. (406) It is, after all, easier to resist a flawed man than a representative of God. To return to Stević's point, not only does Jane work to accommodate desire, but she uses it as the basis to refuse St. John, "scorn[ing] [his] idea of love". (408) Brontë emphasises the existence of desire as part of the female constitution and, through Jane's rejection of a loveless marriage, suggests that experience of passion is a female rite of passage. Having refuted a marriage based on duty, Brontë associates Jane's passion with life, not death. It can be inferred, therefore, that she advocates sexual experience as an integral aspect of successful female development.

Acknowledgement of her passion, consolidation of her principles and the discovery of her own wealth enable Jane to 'return home' to Rochester as an independent individual with a more developed self-knowledge. She overcomes the limitations that hindered her previously and can marry Rochester without its necessitating her dependence. Rita Felski argues that *Jane Eyre* offers an example of only 'a limited degree of female self-development [...] [as] autonomy is ultimately subordinated to the marriage plot', but this does not take into account the fact that Jane embarks on marriage only when her expectations are met.

(1989: 124-5) Furthermore, the event of the marriage itself is explored to a much lesser extent than the turbulence Jane experiences to contentedly reach such a conclusion, which she does independently of the desires of her suitors. Similarly, Margaret Mills suggests that Brontë struggles with a reconciliation of a 'heroine's independent self-realization with her need to be submerged in the powerful masculine "other"'. (2018: 77) But the point here is rather that she avoids submersion; she recognises her tendency towards passivity in the presence of strong characters, but she overcomes this weakness, preventing it from consuming her at the most challenging moments when her very worth is under attack. Through examples of 'exalting' and 'debasing' dynamics, she learns the transformative power of self-assertion and the validity of her own feelings, leading her to a position where she does not have to negate herself in order to integrate into society. In a subversion of St. John's assertions, through knowledge of herself, she comes to believe intellect and romance are not mutually exclusive. As Jen Cadwallader puts it, she reaches the conclusion that 'she is formed for labour and for love'. (2009: 244)

Although, in comparison to the other novels, Jane's *Bildungsroman* offers an example of fruitful female development, the 'socialisation' that Jane undergoes is not without compromise. While it is proven throughout that Jane merits consideration as Rochester's equal, not least in the intellectual stakes, 'equality' at the end of the novel is established partly through his physical affliction. On this point, Stević's suggestion that Brontë's inability to seize legal equality for her heroine means she contrives to achieve it by other means — 'by disempowering Rochester and by empowering Jane' — is certainly worthy of recognition. (2020: 91) Furthermore, Brontë facilitates social cohesion by secluding Jane and Rochester within rural countryside and restricting their social network to close

friends from whom they have already gained acceptance, such as the Rivers sisters and Rochester's servants. Importantly, they do not require the social acceptance of a broader community for survival like Sue and Jude, nor do they need to rely on the philanthropy or understanding that Emma would require were she to settle her debts. Having witnessed the social hostility Jane encounters when poverty-stricken, this is the couple's saving grace. Lorna Ellis's view corroborates the argument that the reconciliation of self-fulfilment and social accommodation in *Jane Eyre* relies upon this compromise: 'Brontë allows her heroine to become reintegrated with "society" by starkly limiting what that "society" is'. (1999: 142) Brontë constructs the ending as a satisfying conclusion for both the individual and society without criticising marriage as an institution *per se*, but her dependence upon these narrative devices suggests that the reality of social accommodation for the forthright Victorian female might not prove so smooth. The double standard remains, in spite of Jane's success, through the movement of Rochester's *Bildung*. In spite of his errors, sexual transgressions, manipulations and deceptions, he survives the fire and avoids the abuse and humiliation of society. Moreover, he is not forced into self-renunciation, he obtains the woman he desires, fathers children and ends the novel on the road to physical recovery. For Rochester, the fire can be understood as a temporary glitch in his trajectory, which in fact permits him to re-establish his life on a more 'exalting' course than before. In short, he evades the demise of the other female protagonists under discussion, including the assumed fate Jane would have suffered had she become his mistress, and ends the narrative with a hopeful future and thriving progeny.

The same cannot be said of Sue and Jude, however, who are left childless and are subjected to intellectual and physical demise respectively. Having said this, male privilege is still evident in Jude's narrative. As mentioned in Chapter

Two, when Jude discovers that he cannot reconcile his sexual impulses with his religious ambitions, he burns his theological texts to rid himself of hypocritical shame in an act which 'afforded his mind a relief'. (Hardy 2016: 178) Similarly, after the death of the children, Jude is able to return to work without the social repercussions experienced by Sue: 'Jude had quite unexpectedly found good employment at his old trade almost directly [...]. People seemed to have forgotten that he had ever shown any awkward aberrancies'. (279) In spite of the failure of his marriage to Arabella, his cohabitation with Sue, his fathering of children outside wedlock and his personal tragedy, he is still able to support himself financially and, essentially, carry on as if nothing had happened. His return to work, and relative normality, coincides with Sue's reversion to conformity following her realisation that no act of self-flagellation could compensate for her inability to reconcile her sexuality, as reflected by her child-bearing, with her 'negation' of civilisation. The divergence in their courses is expressed by Hardy's narrator: 'events which had enlarged his own views of life, laws, customs, and dogmas, had not operated in the same manner on Sue's. She was no longer the same as in the independent days'. (279) This suggests the point at which Jude's path can remain linear and Sue's becomes circular. To return to the phrasing used by Annis Pratt, he is permitted to 'grow up', whereas Sue must 'grow down'. (see Pratt 1981: 14) Jude's 'return home' to Arabella marks the prelude to the conclusion of his *Bildung*, but this is only brought about by second-hand experience of the social pressures of which Sue bears the brunt. His death is hastened by the loss of Sue as his intellectual guide and companion, leaving him bereft of the stimulation that only she can provide. Hardy's image of the dust-marked Greek and Latin texts left on the shelf after Jude's death lingers in the reader's mind as the ultimate reflection of the 'the tragedy of unfulfilled aims' that Hardy mentions in the Preface to the First

Edition. (5) This, however, evokes the metaphorical shelving of not one, but two sparkling intellects.

As Mary Jacobus notes, an unconventional relationship cannot be 'sustained by an enduring rural context' in *Jude the Obscure*. (1975: 320) Jude and Sue cannot reap the protection of the secluded environment in which Jane and Rochester consolidate their happy ending. As inhabitants of Christminster, a city that purports to be a beacon of intellectual progress, they are bound by the traditions and prejudices that underpin social hierarchies. Had their family been able to find shelter, employment and acceptance irrespective of marital status, there would not have been the same degree of degradation and misery that sparked the course of unfortunate events. Whereas Jude is forgiven for his breach of conduct, Sue is not re-admitted to the Training College after her escape, nor can she continue her relationship with Jude after the tragedy that their refusal of sexual conformity incurs. Despite his deterioration and the set-backs he experiences, this is evidence to suggest that Jude also benefits from the process of trial and error inherent to the traditional *Bildungsroman*; it is the reversal of Sue's *Bildung* that seals his fate.

Sue's 'return home' to Phillotson marks the circularity of her *Bildung* and the ultimate sacrifice of the female individual on the "altar of duty". (279) Having considered herself too advanced to take heed of the general teachings given to women, she blames herself for having misinformed Father Time as to the nature of their familial predicament: "Why was I half wiser than my fellow-women? and not entirely wiser! Why didn't I tell him pleasant untruths, instead of half realities? It was my want of self control, so that I could neither conceal things nor reveal them!" (274) Despite her claims to the effect that she is a 'negation' of civilisation, Sue bears the weight of the humiliation associated with the sexuality that she

cannot entirely conceal nor reveal. The shame that she feels leading her children, symbols of her sexual expression, from lodging to lodging seeking refuge denotes her inability to commit fully either to individualism or to conformity, causing her to unwittingly misinform a child whose understanding is not as advanced as her own. The perceived consequences of the actions that she later describes as “a vain attempt at self-delight” force her onto the path of convention; she commits herself to concealment once and for all. (279)

Hardy’s presentation of Sue’s reversion to conformity suggests his criticism of a social order that attributes moral justification to acts which necessitate the misery of the individual. “I wish my every fearless thought could be rooted out of my history. Self-renunciation—that’s everything! I cannot humiliate myself too much”. (280) Her ‘return home’ is her attempt at appeasement for her subversive past and her ‘socialisation’ entails the conversion to the belief that “self-abnegation is the higher road”. (279) The circularity also demonstrates the inability for the female protagonist to find a place in society which does not in fact leave her entirely *displaced*. The discordance between Sue’s inner feelings towards her domestic situation with Phillotson and the way duty bids her behave externally is expressed in conversation with Mrs Edlin towards the end of the novel: “I’ve screwed my weak soul up to treating him more courteously”. (321) Despite Mrs Edlin’s response that a woman ought not to “force [her] nature”, Sue remains adamant that no good comes from attempting to evade convention as she has done: “It is my duty. I will drink my cup to the dregs!”. (321) The conclusion that can be drawn is that reintegration into ‘respectable’ society demands the chastisement of the self.

Hardy renders it evident that nature must be stifled in favour of social artifice for ‘socialisation’ to occur, and marriage is presented as the epitome of such

artifice. Having been persuaded by Sue's previous arguments in favour of personal liberties, Jude attempts to convince her that remarriage to Phillotson would be a perversion of her nature: "Do not do an immoral thing for moral reasons!". (287) In spite of his conviction that Sue *is* his wife "in all but law", Sue remains steadfast in her resolution: "I am Richard's". (281) The first time around, Sue's marriage to Phillotson was 'debasing' in so far as it did not accord to her true desires and left an indelible stain on her reputation. At the point of their divorce, the modern reader is left with a certain respect for Phillotson in his estimation of Sue's arguments over those of his friend, Gillingham, who embodies the attitudes of the patriarchy. Initially, Phillotson refuses to accept Gillingham's stance that he should 'keep her', if nothing else, on the grounds of social stability: "if people did as you want to do, there'd be a general domestic disintegration. The family would no longer be the social unit". (190) However, when Sue returns to him, the reader finds him altered by the repercussions of his sympathy: 'artifice was necessary, he had found, for stemming the cold and inhumane blast of the world's contempt'. (290) Although, at first, Hardy enlists the reader's sympathies for Phillotson, who loses his employment at Shaston as a result of his lenience towards Sue, this can be understood as a set-back on the path of male *Bildung*. Whilst he had been 'reduced' to a 'humble school-house', he still manages to retain employment and is not subjected to destitution. His inclination towards artifice and egotism in his re-acceptance of Sue underpins the debasement of their union the second time around; not only does Sue eventually consummate their marriage, but the door to professional ambition is re-opened to him: 'he might acquire some comfort, resume his old courses, perhaps return to the Shaston school, if not even to the Church as a licentiate'. (290-1) His prospects benefit from the narrowing of Sue's

and he has few reservations about seizing his process of trial and error at her expense.

The decline in Phillotson's respect for Sue is made evident by his resolution to treat her thereafter with "[a] little judicious severity". (297) This confirms his intention to conform more closely to Gillingham's approach which advocates the restriction of a wife's liberties: "I was always against your opening the cage-door and letting the bird go in such an obviously suicidal way. You might have been a school inspector by this time, or a reverend, if you hadn't been so weak about her". (297) Gillingham uses avian imagery in a similar way to Rochester, reflecting his support of the gender imbalance in favour of men. Although Phillotson's approach is more moderate, he comes to accept the personal benefits of gender inequality, adding another facet of tragedy to Hardy's novel. Furthermore, the implication that tyranny and punishment would be both accepted and rewarded by scholastic institutions reiterates the utilitarian nature of such establishments. As long as these principles are supported, not least by promotion and remuneration, the cycle of misery for the classes of society that have been traditionally oppressed continues. Through his demonstration that the attitudes expressed by Gillingham are those that are valued by society, Hardy suggests that society values the wrong principles. In a world in which acts of tyranny and possession are celebrated, there is no room for justice, equality or the 'loving-kindness' Tess D'Urbeyfield pleads for, as it is not in the interests of the privileged to care for others.

Having suffered the effects of authentic self-expression, Sue is unable to resist the roles imposed on her by men as Jane does. Sue's development of self-knowledge corroborates Rosowski's argument that, once a fuller understanding of the self has been reached, there emerges a 'disparity between that self-knowledge

and the nature of the world', rendering 'happy' socialisation impossible. (Rosowski 1983: 49) The circularity of such a trajectory is expressed by Wilhelm Meister: "is life nothing but a racecourse, where one must turn round immediately once one has reached the outmost limit?". (Goethe 1989: 348) Ironically, no limit awaits Wilhelm at the end of Goethe's novel, but this aptly describes the course of Sue's movement from authentic self-expression in the public sphere to repressed insularity in the domestic. As Abel, Hirsch and Langland rightly state, '[c]onfinement to inner life [...] threatens a loss of public activity; it enforces an isolation that may culminate in death. [...] Even if allowed spiritual growth, female protagonists who are barred from public experience must grapple with a pervasive threat of extinction'. (Abel, Hirsch and Langland 1983: 8-9) In Sue's case, the extinction is of a true inner self which must be extinguished in order to repent, although this renunciation of an identity is, in some ways, worse than the literal extinction in which Emma's *Bildung* culminates.

In *Madame Bovary*, Flaubert's presentation of the differing outcomes of male and female *Bildung* is comparable to Hardy's. Like Jude, Charles dies from the loss of his relationship, but he does not suffer the intellectual void experienced by Jude in Sue's absence. Social pressures do not weigh upon him directly, but his life is cut short as a by-product of the female depression that eventually leads to the suicide that he fails to anticipate. He is not an attractive match for Emma, but he is still an innocent victim of the system who is underserving of the fate that befalls him. Léon and Rodolphe, on the other hand, who tread more morally reprehensible paths than Charles, are at liberty to consider Emma as a mere addition to their experience. Although Léon 'avait peur de se compromettre' in his affair with Emma, it does not affect his professional prospects. In fact, when his employer is informed of his indiscretions, he supports him, 'voulant lui dessiller les

yeux, l'avertir du gouffre'. (2001: 378) There is no such moral or financial support to protect Emma, Sue or Valentine from the depths of the abyss, however. The fact that Léon can continue to broaden his horizons through promotional opportunities is indicated by the narrator, demonstrating his ability to leave his mistakes in the past: 'il allait devenir premier clerc: c'était le moment d'être sérieux'. (378)

This is similarly true of Rodolphe, whose manipulation of Emma leaves him unscathed. Through his stark description of Rodolphe's exploitation, Flaubert indicates a sympathetic attitude towards women who find themselves victims of such 'debasing' treatment. She requires Rodolphe's flattery for confirmation of the identity that she projects, which increases her vulnerability and leads her to accept the subjection into which he forces her. Not knowing or mastering herself before their affair, she cannot rely on her agency to refute the roles he imposes on her as Jane can, and thus, she allows him to demote her from the level of mistress to that of whore. Flaubert makes it clear that Rodolphe only sees her for her sexual value, but the emphasis he places on her weakening state towards the end of the affair indicates his compassion for his protagonist. This sentiment is underpinned by a later comment that criticises men of Rodolphe's mould. He describes Rodolphe's behaviour as 'cette lâcheté naturelle qui caractérise le sexe fort', undermining the primacy of the male predator. (401-2) He does not openly condemn Emma's actions, but rather concentrates on the exposition of Rodolphe's deceit and the multiple ways in which Emma is seduced by him. Rodolphe's trajectory hardly falters over the course of the narrative, suggesting society's acceptance of libertine attitudes in men. His survival at the end of the novel indicates the permanence of the double standard and the unjust triumph of the immoral man.

It is Emma's realisation of her impotence to cover her financial errors that leads her to seize the last shred of agency remaining to her. Having exhausted the

limited means at her disposal, even stooping to prostitution in a vain attempt to obtain the money she owes, she sees her possibilities dwindle before her in an apocalyptic epiphany: 'Il lui sembla tout à coup que des globules couleur de feu éclataient dans l'air'. (405) Her comprehension of her inevitable fate leads her towards the 'abîme' from which Léon was so gallantly saved. (405) With the looming threat of the bailiffs' arrival, she is barred from a literal 'return home'; she is, however, returned to her starting point of separation and alienation, which she consolidates with her suicide. The self-knowledge Emma eventually arrives at confirms that the boundaries of her imagination, as fed by her novels, are far broader than the realities of the social opportunities available to her; she will never be able to truly experience the prosperity, chivalry or love that fuel her ambition, nor can she live independently of the men that restrict her. To underscore the true limits of her subjectivity, Flaubert describes her death in gruesome detail: 'Elle ne tarda pas à vomir du sang. Ses lèvres se serrèrent davantage. Elle avait les membres crispés, le corps couvert de taches brunes'. (412) Her death is not a beautiful scene of peaceful serenity that might have been offered by a romantic novel, but an excruciating, guttural reality that marks the end of her illusion. Emma touches the outermost boundary of her racecourse and plummets towards the abyss that awaits her.

The far-reaching consequences of Emma's circular *Bildung*, and her inability to access the trial and error that benefits her lovers, are demonstrated through the fate of her daughter. Berthe has no chance of acquiring the education that Jane's children are to enjoy, nor is she to be supported by a stable home life. At the end of the novel, following the death of her parents, she is left to an impoverished aunt and sent to work in the cotton mill. The cycle of female disempowerment is reinforced by Emma's demise, and subsequently, the reader is left with little hope

that Berthe will be able to liberate herself from the restrictions of her class or gender. She is, in fact, in an even less advantageous position than her mother at the beginning of the novel. Flaubert paints a picture of regression as opposed to progress, which insinuates a critical attitude towards a system in which there is no provision for the ambitious or sensual woman.

A contented 'return home' is similarly obstructed in *Valentine*. The news of Lansac's death bestows a new sense of hope upon Bénédict and Valentine, but a resurgence of patriarchal, class-driven behaviour dampens this hope before it can be acted upon. Pierre Blutty's jealous assumption that Bénédict's designs are upon Athénaïs leads him to trespass upon the Lhéry farm with his 'fourche de fer' on which Bénédict falls upon his departure. (Sand 1856: 84) This death can be read as a symbolic conclusion to the class ignorances that Sand critiques over the course of the novel. Blutty does not stop to analyse or reflect on the situation at hand, but resorts immediately to aggression when he fears he is being cuckolded. His violence on this occasion is foreshadowed by his behaviour at his wedding and in both instances he proves the veracity of Bénédict's criticism of the unenlightened: 'il y a des hommes semblables à des brutes, qui ont des yeux pour ne pas voir et des oreilles pour ne pas entendre'. (45) Bénédict is killed by the brutish behaviour of the agricultural class, an event which subsequently brings about Valentine's decline. This can be interpreted as Sand's demonstration of the futility of artificial divisions of class. It follows that universal access to the education that has raised Bénédict above the superficiality of his rank would benefit not just women such as Valentine, Louise and Athénaïs, but also the likes of Blutty and his friends, whose ignorance is conducive only to death.

Death concludes the circularity of Valentine's *Bildung*, but Sand does not leave the reader with the same sense of despair on which Hardy and Flaubert end

their novels. The Lhérys and the Raimbaults are united by the marriage of Valentin and Athénaïs in a fusion of classes that overhauls the outdated and prejudiced system that so thwarted Valentine's development. While the elder Valentine was unable to integrate into society, the mixing of classes carves a place for Louise as her granddaughter's tutor. This indicates the possibility of a more optimistic upbringing for little Valentine than that which was experienced by her grandmother and great-aunt. Freed from the restrictions of jealousy, Louise can mentor her granddaughter with the same nurturing attitude with which she treated her sister in her infancy. Sand creates the possibility of a new kind of 'home' in which all the occupants can thrive in their diversity and benefit from the wisdom of each other's experience. Consequently, readers of *Jane Eyre* and *Valentine* are reassured that the damaging effects of a utilitarian education, provided by corrupt institutions and self-interested parents and guardians, will not be inflicted on the future generations of women in the heroines' families. The lasting impression offered by Brontë and Sand is that the mixing of classes, combined with the prospect of a liberal education, might pave the way for the future prosperity of female *Bildung*.

Conclusion

As we have seen in the preceding chapters, the philosophy and practice of education is substantially shaped by wider socio-cultural developments. As the general trend of nineteenth-century politics in both England and France moved towards the broadening of male suffrage, the fear and memory of revolution influenced political and cultural agendas. Liberal ideas were seen as threatening the stability of established institutions and provoked fierce opposition. One manifestation of this conflict between progress and reaction was the generation of an anxiety which, as Barbara Taylor writes, 'must find expression in a language capable of situating and resolving it before it becomes translated into a new world-view'; the language in which they found 'that reassurance was religious enthusiasm'. (2016: 62) This religious enthusiasm gave rise to a culture of restriction which bore particularly heavily on women. The interplay between progress and reaction could also be said to inform a number of nineteenth-century novels in England and France, including those discussed in this thesis.

In France, the Napoleonic code of 1804 clawed back some of the liberties that women had obtained in the early years of the revolution by insisting upon their subordination and obedience towards men and the containment of their lives within the domestic sphere: 'Women had been reduced to the status of a legal caste at the same time that the *ancien régime* legal class system was abolished for men'. (Moses 1984: 18) An ensuing religious revival championed the traditional family unit, reinforcing the paternal hierarchy within the home, providing the bedrock of post-revolutionary stability. Arguments in favour of the expansion of women's rights were frequently met with hostility as they could be associated with Jacobin agendas. Similarly, in England, evangelicals used the association

between socialist agendas (e.g. Owenism, Chartism) and the threat to stability to their advantage as a means of reinforcing social control which, once again, significantly limited women's freedoms: 'identifying women's rights with sexual libertarianism, infidelism and social revolution' had the effect of 'detach[ing] sexual egalitarianism from the new canons of middle-class respectability'. (Taylor 2016: 15) The conventional conservative attitude to challenges to the traditional view of woman as wife, mother, homemaker was one of 'outraged horror', rendering it difficult to make progress even in small increments with less radical ideas. (275) Parallels can therefore be drawn between the widening of the franchise for men and the broadening of women's rights in both countries: neither were given willingly, but were rather characterised by conflict and achieved only gradually through domestic and public subversive action.

In a climate in which state control of the population was paramount to avoid revolution, education was a tool which could be implemented in both countries to ensure that the class system remained steadfast and that male and upper-class privileges were protected. Working-class men and women of all classes were trained to assume their roles in systems in fear of revolt, but unlike men, women were confined by the precepts of both gender and caste. The ideal of womanhood, as Joan N. Burnstyn describes it, 'cast woman as an entity and left little room for variations among individuals. The ideal was prescriptive and spread its tentacles through all the institutions designed for women's education'. (1980: 11) This implies that the very state of being female excluded women from the opportunity to indulge in the individualism celebrated by the Romantic movement and the culture of self-improvement celebrated by Samuel Smiles. The lack of a female curriculum which encompassed anything other than needlework, instruction for domestic duties and paltry training in accomplishments intended to attract a husband meant

that any chance of exceeding the limits imposed by a utilitarian education had to be undertaken independently. While 'self-help' was a male prerogative among the middle and working classes in England, carving a route for the disenfranchised to collaborate as a means of 'civic participation' which created a 'crucial [component] of municipal and national culture', women's efforts to improve themselves through self-directed learning were considered far more subversive. (Rodrick 2001: 46) As Taylor writes, 'if docile ignorance was a mark of conventional femininity, so the battle for self-enlightenment was a true mark of a female dissident'. (2016: 63-64)

The English and French utilitarian approach to education, and specifically female education, poses a marked contrast to the ideas posed by Wilhelm von Humboldt in Prussia at the beginning of the century, which place value on the individual through the development of *Bildung*. In his role within the Section for Education, Humboldt was a proponent of the argument that 'persons educated to be free individuals will ultimately be better citizens than men educated to be citizens'. (Sorkin 1983: 64) He placed importance on the process of perfecting the individual with a view to cultivating a mutually beneficial relationship between this person and the outside world through which they could simultaneously 'leave a visible impression of [their] worth on the constitutions [they] [form]', and reap the personal benefits of the ensuing 'clarifying light and the comforting warmth of everything that [they] [undertake]'. (1999: 59) Humboldt's approach to education encompasses outer and inner development, formal education as well as various psychological and social processes of formation. Successful *Bildung*, in his view, culminates in the integration of the individual into society — an exchange characterised by 'animated' and 'unrestrained interplay'. (*cited in* Westbury, Hoppman and Riquarts 1999: 59) A fusion of this nature, however, demands two prerequisites: first, the freedom for the individual to develop their innate faculties

and realise their potential, and second, social interaction which allows for personal development 'through the voluntary interchange of one's individuality with that of others.' (Sorkin 1983: 58-9) This includes the freedom to learn by trial and error. The value Humboldt places on freedom forms the basis of his egalitarian vision of an ideal education system which would pay no heed to class or tradition, but would rather form new social bonds by associating those 'who would not associate as citizens' due to the distinctions between the classes into which they were born. (Sorkin 1983: 63) In Humboldt's view, *Bildung* is a process which relies upon *and* brings about freedom. It allows for freer interaction within the population by breaking down class barriers; creates better citizens as a happy consequence of providing the individual with the means to achieve their potential; and constitutes another argument against authoritarian government.

Reading *Jane Eyre*, *Valentine*, *Madame Bovary* and *Jude the Obscure* as female *Bildungsromane* allows for a central focus on the criticism of the socially condoned channels of education for women that is conveyed in these novels. By centralising individual female experiences, the novelists emphasise the inherent hypocrisy at the core of both formal schooling and the social education imparted by elders in a domestic setting. What emerges in the references to formal educational establishments in these novels is an impression that education for women through official channels achieves neither the objective of creating obedient adherents to the feminine ideal willing to sacrifice themselves on the altars of duty, nor the effect of 'strengthen[ing] and heighten[ing] the powers of [individual] nature' in such a way that advances their *Bildung* so that they might achieve their potential. (Humboldt *cited in* Westbury, Hoppman and Riquarts, 1999: 58) Furthermore, they all represent the typical motives fuelling institutionalised education for women in both countries at their points of publication: the intention is

to form women who know their place with regards to their gender and their respective classes. “On nous élève toujours pour être riches; jamais pour être pauvres”, says Valentine on the subject of her convent education, which leaves those of her caste equipped to fulfil but one occupation: “c’est d’être femme de chambre”. (Sand 1856: 13) Sand’s criticism of such schooling for aristocratic girls is evident; the instruction they receive is clearly intended to prepare them for dependence within marriage to an upper-class gentleman and endows them with minimal marketable skills on which they might be able to support themselves. This reflects the assumption that marriage to a member of the same class is the inevitable destiny of girls in Valentine’s position and that they need be trained only for this role.

Charlotte Brontë’s characterisation of Mr Brocklehurst reflects a similarly critical attitude towards the tendency of educational establishments to educate girls according to the position they were born into. He openly defers to Mrs Reed’s wishes that Jane be “trained in conformity to her position and prospects” at Lowood, expecting that she “will shew herself grateful for the inestimable privilege of her election”. (2000: 34-5) In fact, he is only concerned with the preservation of his own privilege, as can be derived from the way in which he parades the finery enjoyed by his own daughters in front of girls of lesser fortune. Brontë’s creation of a deeply hypocritical figure motivated by wealth as the overseer of an institution of female education posits the idea that such establishments are designed to impose limits on women, rather than liberate them through cultivation of their specific capacities. As the intention is that they should become part of the established order, they are educated as a group to be grateful and self-denying, rather than as individuals with unique talents who might disrupt the class and gender hierarchies on which English society is based.

Flaubert's presentation of Emma's experience of the mid-century French convent is comparable to the criticism of such establishments that Sand makes through Valentine; it leaves the reader with a similar impression of the consequences of such an education for women with regards to the neglect of practical skills which could form the foundations of independence. To revert to Humboldt's ideas, Emma cannot reap the benefits of an exchange with the outside world because she has not been trained in the art of distinguishing fiction from reality. She is absorbed by the sensuality and mysticism of Catholicism which clouds rather than hones her judgement, meaning that her expectations of the outside world bear no resemblance to reality. As Jane Rendall notes, by 1863 (7 years after the publication of *Madame Bovary*), 54 per cent of female pupils were under instruction by religious orders, whereas this was the case for only 22 per cent of male pupils. (see Rendall 1985: 148) The reasons Rendall offers for this stark difference are the quality of teaching that could be expected in these establishments given that nuns required no qualification, and the fact that boys followed a separate curriculum which, it can be assumed, most nuns were unqualified to teach. These facts, argues Rendall, 'must surely have stressed the different kind of education and future offered to girls'. (148)

Flaubert's depiction of the inefficacy of the nuns as mentors for Emma chimes with this overview offered by Rendall, suggesting his critical attitude towards the convent schooling undertaken by the majority of female pupils in the 1850s. The consequences of Emma's education in the convent are that her judgement and powers of reflection are hardly further advanced than they were prior to her schooling. Flaubert provides no indication that any significant intellectual, emotional or moral progress has been made through the convent's teaching, but underlines the fact that Emma's intellectual faculties are not lacking

by endowing her with the ability to recite the catechism and to engage with 'les questions difficiles'. (Flaubert 2001: 85) The implication is that the fault lies with the guidance, not the pupil. He makes her ambition to climb the social ladder evident, but her formal education leaves her with no profitable skills which allow her to do so of her own accord. Like Valentine, the effect of this type of formal education is to perpetuate dependence; it is only the shift in reliance upon father to husband through which a woman like Emma has any hope of enlarging her capital or social status. As an individual in her own right, her formal schooling does not equip her to pursue her social aspirations independently of men.

Hardy's representation of the English Training College for women, the likes of which had begun to appear from the middle of the century, can be compared to Brontë's presentation of Jane's boarding school experience. Although Lowood is atypical of the secondary schooling that girls would have received in mid-nineteenth-century England and bears closer resemblance in structure, method, curriculum and discipline to the schooling undertaken by boys, Brontë reflects on her own experiences of schooling at Cowan Bridge in her portrayal of this establishment. Neither Brontë nor Hardy denies the academic benefits or the need for the formal learning that Jane and Sue undergo, but their value as centres of enlightenment is not the dominant characteristic of these institutions. The purpose of Sue's Training College and Lowood under Brocklehurst is to produce cohorts of women who have had the practices of obedience and self-abnegation impressed upon them as duties of womanhood and are likely to become future propagators of the same values in their roles as mothers, teachers and governesses of young girls. They are presented as being more academically rigorous than the French convent in the novels under consideration and provide their pupils with a foundation of knowledge and skills on which they can support themselves outside

of marriage. Again, neither Brontë nor Hardy criticises the possibility of female independence as a consequence of this type of schooling. Instead, they leave the reader with the lingering impression that this opportunity in fact hinges upon the stipulation of control. In these establishments, economic and professional independence are not synonymous with autonomy or celebration of the individual; they are to render the woman 'self-denying', 'mortify[ing] [within her] the lusts of the flesh', in order that she remain subdued, compliant and unlikely to pose any threat of sexual or social rebellion. (Brontë 2000: 63-4)

In both examples of English schooling, the policy of physical control extends beyond the insistence upon sexual repression to poor living conditions and privation. '[D]ependence of body naturally produces dependence of mind', argues Mary Wollstonecraft and thus, by creating the correct conditions for weakness and frailty to thrive, these schools produce adherents to the then-common female role models and reinforce the arguments in favour of male supremacy based on superior strength. (2008: 111) Evidence of this debilitation can be derived from the illness resulting from Brocklehurst's austere regime at Lowood, weakening some girls to the point of extinction, and the rationing enforced by Sue's Training College, which she admits leaves her 'dreadfully hungry'. (Hardy 2016: 110)

The frugality and discipline, as well as the greater emphasis on academic achievement in the English schools as opposed to the French convents, is reflective of what Max Weber was later to describe as the Protestant work ethic; he argues that Protestantism places greater emphasis on personal duty in the quest for salvation than does Catholicism. Needless to say, however, that malnourishment does not lay the most solid foundations for intellectual achievement, but modesty, humility and uniformity are held in high esteem,

suggesting scepticism and critique on the part of both novelists towards the purposes of girls' education through official channels. As Hardy writes of the students lying in the Training College dormitory, 'every face [bore] the legend "The Weaker" upon it, as the penalty of the sex wherein they were moulded', implying his attitude is that schooling of this nature is designed to consign women to their place in the social hierarchy. (Hardy 2016: 116)

Although the reader can glimpse the potential for intellect to develop for Jane and Sue at their respective institutions, the dissemination of the moral rules on which all four institutions are based fails to fulfil the objective of either the cultivation of *Bildung* that Humboldt champions or that of a utilitarian education intended to produce subservience and compliance. As already discussed, the purpose of the French convents as depicted by Sand and Flaubert is not to produce capable individuals whose formal education is designed to perfect their individual faculties, but rather dependants whose only recourse is to marry. In both cases, however, the French novelists demonstrate the inefficacy of this approach by foregrounding the reaction such an education provokes in the minds of their protagonists. In *Valentine*, Sand devotes the longest speech in the novel to Valentine's expression of her exasperation with the education of upper-class girls in the convent. She highlights the insidious control of a regime that aims to instruct girls, but only to a certain point, after which they are considered 'ridicules', and the failures of a curriculum that does not account for the eventuality that these girls might need to support themselves in society. (1856: 13) What becomes apparent is Valentine's resistance to the conformity and dependence that the convent attempts to impose; her criticism and questioning of the schooling she has undergone demonstrates that the training that leads girls to accept a position of subservience and helplessness has failed in her case. Rather than fall victim to a

system that teaches 'les éléments de tout [...] [sans] rien approfondir', she takes steps to reinforce her own security by perfecting a profitable skill on which she could anchor her independence. (13) She retaliates against female dependence in both thought and action in a way that undermines the very principles that the convent intends to govern her.

Flaubert makes it even more explicit that the convent fails to tame Emma's wayward inclinations. He mocks the astonishment of the nuns when they, having lavished upon her so many prayers and 'bons conseils pour la modestie du corps', realise Emma has slipped from their grasp, and highlights the fact that Emma's resistance to discipline is fortified by the control to which she is subjected. (2001: 90) Flaubert also conveys the futility of a system that aims to establish discipline and obedience through tight restrictions, as this inevitably results in violation of the regime. Emma uses the imagery provided by the convent curriculum not to become truly pious or self-denying, but to indulge herself further in her wild imagination which remains beyond the reach of the nuns' supervision. This supervision is yet further undermined by the ease with which the washerwoman is able to smuggle in romance novels which are consumed by Emma and her fellow pupils as if contraband, illustrating the universal appeal of the illicit. Through these details, Flaubert shows that Emma's reaction 'contre la discipline' is not exceptional, but natural and predictable. (90) She does not consciously question the methods and motives of the education she receives as Valentine does, but the outcome is comparable. Neither convent succeeds in moulding Valentine or Emma to become pliant or deferential and, ironically, the opposite effect is achieved; they rebel, consciously or instinctively, first against the principles of the schooling they receive, and later against the mores of society which prevent them from acting according to their desires.

The English novels also demonstrate that the consequences of the application of strict discipline contradict the objectives of the educational establishments. When Brocklehurst brandishes his authority by decreeing that the Lowood girls' hair should be cut when it exceeds his standards of modesty, Brontë illustrates the resistance with which he is met: 'Miss Temple passed her handkerchief over her lips, as if to smooth away the involuntary smile that curled them', and the girls themselves mock his pedantry, leading Jane to conclude that 'whatever he might do with the outside of the cup and platter, the inside was further beyond his interference than he imagined'. (2000: 64) Brontë conveys the idea that adherence to this discipline is superficial, resulting only in Brocklehurst being 'little liked'. (69) She shows that this type of regime offers no prospect of longevity; as soon as illness spreads within the school and Brocklehurst retreats, Jane no longer fears his authority or follows his rules, but revels in the opportunity freely to explore what lies beyond the school gates. Having already experienced patriarchal authoritarianism in her schooling, she views it as an obstacle to overcome as opposed to a form of government to which she must surrender, laying the foundations on which she is to later defy Rochester and St. John when they threaten her freedom.

Similarly, when Sue is reprimanded with solitary confinement by the Training College for staying out all night with Jude, she eschews the constraints of the imposed discipline and gravitates towards liberation by breaking out of her cell and wading through the river. One could infer that Hardy is suggesting that, despite her later conformity to the objectives of the Training College, Sue's excursion to the river is symbolic of self-assertion. The methods used by the college incite in Sue a desire to escape — to slip the bit from her mouth to borrow Flaubert's metaphor. She undertakes this course of action instinctively, before she has any time for

reflection, indicating once again that compliance does not arise from restraint. Furthermore, the other girls at the Training College form a united front in Sue's defence, refusing to work until her punishment is revoked. The example of the punishment Sue receives does not dissuade them from rebellion, but instead provokes further transgression.

The overall impression is that the education imparted through formal establishments in all four novels achieves few of the advantages envisaged by Humboldt's proposition of a communal *Bildung*-led education system: they are not intended to develop the individual's specific faculties in such a way that might be of personal benefit (and consequently benefit society) and they do not facilitate an environment in which classes can mix and thus, social limitations be overcome. Most paradoxically, by prioritising social conformity in the education of girls, these establishments actually generate a spirit of resistance to authority and custom, particularly when they come into conflict with personal feelings of justice or desire. The 'educare' approach to the education of women adopted by these institutions, or, rather, the training of women to fulfil a specific passive social function, is also the approach taken by the parent and guardian figures that appear in these novels.

An appealing role model of this nature is notably lacking, most strikingly in the novels by the female authors who represent these figures as fundamentally deplorable. Mrs Reed and the comtesse and marquise de Raimbault respectively bring Jane and Valentine up to know their place in the social hierarchy, Jane as an orphan with no meaningful connections and Valentine as a member of the aristocracy. Despite the disparity between these social stations, the guardians have similar expectations of their charges: they are to adhere the customs of their

class and position without question or challenge. Neither Brontë nor Sand conveys any notion of altruism in this type of upbringing, which is intended to reinforce the class privileges enjoyed by the Reeds and the Raimbault family. It is portrayed as being motivated solely by adherence to external appearances, paying no attention to the internal moral, emotional or intellectual cultivation of Jane or Valentine. The focus of this social education is not on the benefits for the individual which arise from the process of learning, but on the outcome. Mrs Reed and the comtesse impose identities on Jane and Valentine under the apprehension that doing so will strengthen the outward appearance of the respectability of their families.

Underpinning such an approach is the motivation to perpetuate a class hierarchy which becomes vulnerable in a climate of social aspiration. The comtesse, for example, is horrified at the idea that Athénaïs, a child of the bourgeoisie, has access to a piano and might therefore encroach on the preserves of the aristocracy, which she herself ascended to from a lower birth. The attitude that ensues from the desire to protect one's rank in these cases is fundamentally patriarchal. Mrs Reed subjugates Jane and the comtesse hurries Valentine into a suitable marriage in order to rid herself of the bind of maternity as soon as possible. The approach is thus utilitarian like the education received in schools and, likewise, is self-serving and hypocritical. Neither woman displays the nurture or devotion expected of mothers, but they require Jane and Valentine to adhere unquestioningly to the patriarchal conventions that they themselves breach. These hypocritical regimes reliant upon restraint and coercion unwittingly produce outcomes which are contrary to their intention. Through her aunt's behaviour, Jane gains insight into the prejudice she will encounter in the outside world, which lays the foundations for her self-knowledge. Contrary to Mrs Reed's exactions, she learns to challenge authority when she feels it is being used despotically, aided by

her reading of history and satire. In Valentine's case, a combination of peaceful self-study, sisterly nurture and natural integrity lead her to reject rather than emulate the examples set by her mother and grandmother. Ironically, therefore, authoritarianism in this context encourages the pursuit and expression of the individuality it seeks to repress.

In contrast, the parents in the novels penned by the male authors bestow upon their daughters a legacy of familial tradition that proves difficult for them to overthrow. Flaubert, like Brontë and Sand, employs social and economic status as the dominant characteristic of Emma's father; although he cares for his daughter in a way that the other parents do not, he drives his own agenda under the guise of guaranteeing Emma's security and happiness in marriage. He views Emma according to her net worth and cost, reflecting the contemporary concern of parents needing to support their daughters before marriage when they have neither the tools nor the opportunities to live independently. Given his own respect for class and learned professions, he assumes that Emma will share in his excitement at the prospect of marriage to a respectable doctor, but his true satisfaction lies in the belief that he is sealing a sound business deal with a man who will not quibble over the dowry. Flaubert's omission of conversation between Emma and her father denotes the lack of guidance she receives from him; he fails to interrogate social custom and thus unconsciously imposes an identity upon her through his expectation that she will be content in what he sees as an advantageous match. Through his presentation of the wedding preparations, Flaubert highlights the way in which Rouault's adherence to bourgeois customs acts as an opposing force to Emma's individual wishes, foreshadowing the discontent she is to experience in marriage to Charles. Later, in the absence of any constructive mentoring or true companionship, Emma follows the example set

by her father in his pursuit of home comforts by using spending as an antidote to her disillusionment. Possession of material symbols of class and the performance of tropes of class, as seen through the parenting received by Jane and Valentine, do not bring about contentment. They are depicted by these novelists as superficial emblems of success which in fact reflect the anxieties underlying nineteenth-century society with its preoccupations of duty, prosperity and fear of revolution.

Although the case of Sue Bridehead is different in that the aberrant behaviour of her parents does not conform to the bourgeois template, the course of her progress is such that the reader observes it in the context of the absence of the symbols and markers of class. She is not motivated by possessions as status symbols, nor is she circumscribed by the demands of parents dictating that she behave in a way that befits her rank. The precedent set by her parents' separation, and particularly her mother's pursuit of independence at the expense of her social duty, lays the foundations for Sue's bohemian trajectory. In contrast to Valentine and Emma's experiences of being pushed towards marriage by their parents, the influence of Sue's has the opposite effect. She enters the narrative living and working independently, the very possibility of which is testament to the progress achieved since occupations and education for women started to become more widely accessible from the middle of the century. The legacy of Sue's parents lays the ground for her more sceptical attitude towards marriage, echoing the challenges to conventional behaviour emanating from new developments of feminism. By 1895 when Hardy published *Jude the Obscure*, the women's movement was gathering momentum through events such as the passing of the Married Women's Property Acts of 1870 and 1882 and the emergence of the New

Woman figure whose effect it was to contend with *The Angel in the House* that had hitherto served as the benchmark for nineteenth-century womanhood.

In retrospect, it is clear that the essential conservatism of perceived ideas about the education of girls was increasingly inadequate in preparing women to deal with the challenges of the changing times. In the fictional worlds created by these authors, one of the key elements compensating for this disparity is the resort of the four heroines to private study or reading. The importance of self-education and reading should be appreciated on the grounds of the opposition they pose to the forms of utilitarian education previously discussed; the latter serve the status quo whereas the former offer a means of self-development or self-satisfaction irrespective of their value to society.

The theme of self-education is most prevalent in the English novels under discussion here, perhaps because of the growing popularity of self-improvement for men as a means of social ascension and potential political participation in a society where the franchise was attained in a piecemeal manner. 'So long as the franchise was defined in an exclusionary fashion', writes Rodrick, 'aspiration could be the foundation for popular citizenship'. (2001: 46) An aspect of culture was thus developed in mid-century England which, on one hand, allowed the individual to educate himself beyond the prescriptions of his caste, enhancing his socio-economic prospects and aiding his progression towards his true potential, and on the other, allowed him access to a community of peers doing likewise. Self-education, therefore, is an integral aspect of *Bildung*, a process entailing both 'becoming' and 'belonging', usually against the odds. Samuel Smiles's *Self Help* (1859) articulates this spirit of possibility and opportunity through personal progress, although his choice of lexis and the importance he attributes to

'manliness' reflect the fact that his guidance is also exclusionary, 'comprising a muscular parlance that baffles women's participation'. (Sinnema 2002: xxii-xxiii)

Brontë and Hardy, however, offer examples of women thwarted by both rank and gender who devote themselves to private study despite its being a male preserve. Jane is first inclined to read as a means of obtaining solace as an outcast, but this initial desire for escapism through nature, history and satire soon progresses into a deepened comprehension of herself, her environment and the obstacles she is to face in the outside world. Studying examples of persecution brings about an understanding of her own subservience and the mechanics of oppression, allowing her to develop her own personal morality which prioritises a justice which is lacking in society. It is through this knowledge of herself and historical examples of rebellion that she is able to refute the subservient identities associated with her class and gender that are imposed on her at each stage in her development. While Sand does not provide any details of Valentine's reading material, she too suggests that her private study acts as a remedy to her mother's despotism, allowing her an opportunity to develop her own peaceful temperament. As in Jane's case, reading is presented as a means of self-exploration which counters the degrading expectations of her elders.

Similarly, Sue's reading of philosophy and Romantic poetry provide her with persuasive tools to reject the established order at moments when her liberty is compromised. Her study enables her to strengthen the credibility of her principles through her ability to anchor them within the literary canon; her aptitude in referencing J.S. Mill, Shelley and Browning among others allows her to both support her arguments in favour of personal liberty and participate in a community of thought that her reality denies her. Brontë and Hardy present reading as a force

of enlightenment, a means of 'educere' — the opportunity for women to direct their own learning and development, leading them to question and challenge accepted conventions. In doing so, they are able to identify and explore aspects of themselves which may otherwise have remained dormant, providing them with language through which they can defend themselves against patriarchal forces. For these women, reading constitutes an exercise in authenticity, providing them with the tools for self-assertion. The identities they cultivate are transgressive, albeit temporarily so in Sue's case, contingent upon innate self-respect and unequivocally worthy of academic recognition, not least by their male counterparts in the novels. Sue's resolve is weakened when she realises that expression of her true identity, and particularly her unconventional attitude towards marriage, is incompatible with maternity. Hardy presents the lamentable conclusion that Sue the intellect and Sue the mother cannot co-exist in a 'world [that] is not illuminated enough for such experiments'. (Hardy 2016: 286) In the case of both Jane and Sue, reading has an elucidating effect on the self and offers means through which intellects can be sated and developed. The problem for Sue is that having gained understanding of herself, she experiences first hand the social and physical repercussions of her resistance to convention and sees no other alternative than a regressive course of 'self-renunciation'. (280) Her reading gives her an insight into the kind of life that might be possible if Mill's arguments were to gain acceptance on a broader scale, or rather, if she were not defined by the limits and expectations of womanhood.

Although Emma Bovary's reading is not in the same academic league as Jane's or Sue's, her desire for escapism is comparable to that of Jane in her childhood. In contrast to Jane, however, her reading of romance novels engenders delusion as opposed to clarity, causing her to misread people and their intentions

towards her, not least due to her lack of introspection. In this sense, Emma does not reap the same benefits of self-preservation from her reading as Jane and instead falls victim to predators and vices which eventually consume her. Yet reading does allow her a form of self-preservation through exercise of her imagination which allows her to test a variety of identities that are unavailable to her. Notably, Flaubert does not denounce his character for this, but rather validates this need for emancipation from her surroundings by centralising her frustrations and her inability to achieve her aspirations independently; it is through her imagination that she obtains autonomy.

‘Women who wanted to progress to further education were psychologically mannish and therefore objects of suspicion’, writes Susie Steinbach on the opposition to the broadening of educational opportunities for women in England from the middle of the century. (2005: 190) The argument that any desire for education which overstepped the requirements of domesticity was inherently ‘unfeminine’ was also deployed in France. Proudhon, for example, who was elected to the Constituent Assembly in 1848, asserted that the very state of womanhood was defined by beauty. Despite branding himself an anarchist, as well as his efforts in support of individual liberty, he was resolutely misogynistic. When women don ‘une barbe philosophique’, he argues, in an attempt to grasp intellectual concepts which lie beyond their remit, they commit an act of transgression which destabilises his notion of femininity: ‘celle qui [...] se mêle de *réfuter* des théories qu’elle ne comprend pas et que cependant elle pille [...], cette femme-là déchoit et devient laide’. (1875: 33-4) He casts intellectual venture outside the received boundaries of womanhood as a criminal act and evidently finds female engagement in a ‘male’ field especially distasteful. The inference here is that it was in the general interest of society to preserve its hierarchy by

dismissing learned women as pariahs with dubious morals. The fear was that women educated beyond the demarcations of the private sphere would become 'discontent and unfit for lives as wives and mothers', which would result in a disruption of the established order. (Steinbach 2005: 189) Calling into question the social respectability of female intellect therefore rendered it an unappealing prospect for many, meaning that educated women were a social anomaly. As Harriet Taylor Mill argued in 1851, '[h]igh mental powers in women will be but an exceptional accident, until every career is open to them, and until they, as well as men, are educated for themselves and for the world'. (16)

The importance of community in the culture of self-improvement is underlined by Smiles in *Self-Help*. While he expounds the possibilities of independent achievement, he recognises that full potential cannot be reached in a vacuum: 'From infancy to old age, all are more or less indebted to others for nurture and culture'. (2002: 35) Combined with his emphasis on the essential condition of 'manliness' in self-improvement, women are doubly excluded from this culture, both on the grounds of gender and the resulting difficulty of establishing a like-minded community. Self-education, as described in Smiles's work, follows the course of *Bildung* that Humboldt envisaged for Prussian schooling: it simultaneously develops the innate faculties of an individual and provides the basis for new relationships to be formed, gaining him acceptance into a wider social sphere. Self-education, especially in the form of reading, is therefore an integral aspect of the *Bildungsroman*. Specifically, in the female *Bildungsroman*, reading becomes a practice that illustrates the conflict between the development of an authentic or aspirational identity and the reconciliation of that identity with a society that is hostile to its existence. Smiles's model for self-improvement functions on the assumption that the community of men that it unites will accept

idiosyncrasies and prioritise 'common bonds [...] while minimizing superficial differences'. (Rodrick 2001: 40) In the male context, diversity and difference fuel lively debate, whereas in the female context, distinguishing oneself from one's gender or class by virtue of intellectual ambition has the opposite effect of alienating the individual.

As discussed in Chapter Five, the traditional male model of the *Bildungsroman* comprises at least one 'debasing' and one 'exalting' romantic relationship. Considering these novels as female *Bildungsromane* leads to the conclusion that the success of female *Bildung* depends largely upon the possibility of forming or finding female communities with common interests and objectives. This underpins the linear development of *Jane Eyre* whose structure most resembles that of the male model. Notably, the potential for the establishment of these female communities only exists in the novels penned by the female authors, indicating an understanding of the need for mutual sympathy in a climate in which the growth of female intellect and self-knowledge is an isolating process. It is therefore fair to assert that the female communities that Brontë creates for Jane are arguably the most 'exalting' connections forged by any of the protagonists under study, romantic or otherwise. These communities are formed twice, first at Lowood with Helen Burns and Miss Temple and second at Moor House with Mary and Diana Rivers, and are founded primarily on a shared interest in cultivating intellectual appetites. They are valuable for Jane on numerous levels: they motivate her, educate her, instil confidence and strengthen the courage of her convictions, enabling her to refine and assert herself in situations which may otherwise render her passive. It is this support in moments of weakness that permits the linearity of her narrative to continue; they aid her by encouraging her to overcome the threat of subjugation which could reverse the course of her *Bildung*.

Ultimately, these communities are forces of intellectual inspiration that validate her as an individual and oppose coercion.

In *Valentine*, Sand's initial presentation of the pavilion gives the impression that it could serve the same function as Moor House in *Jane Eyre*. It is equipped for private and communal study and is set apart from the main Raimbault and Lhéry households, and so is protected from outside influence. The close bond of nurture forged between Valentine and Louise in Valentine's childhood, as well as Valentine's inclination to private study, lead to the assumption that they could each benefit academically from one another in such an environment, particularly when they lack neither intellectual capacities nor materials. One reason that the pavilion does not fulfil its potential in this regard is the failure of Louise's *Bildung*; banished from the household for giving birth outside of wedlock, her ostracisation leaves her with a sense of despondency that negatively impacts her determination to cultivate her intellect and her ability to mother her son with the same diligence that she paid to Valentine. A second is the romantic allure of Bénédict which inhibits Louise's ability to counsel Valentine without bias. This conflict of interest hinders the establishment of common objectives and thus throws the relationship off balance; they cannot truly collaborate as equals due to the effects of Louise's social disadvantage, nor can Louise continue as Valentine's moral mentor in good faith. She does, however, act as a living example to Valentine of the social consequences of breaching the convention expected of women. In spite of this, Sand emphasises the prevalence of justice and filial concern within Louise's morality, suggesting a sympathetic attitude to women who are unable to redeem themselves for errors made in youth. She does not justify the repercussions of Louise's actions, but highlights the tragedy of lost potential in capable women and a promising female community.

In Sand's novel, it is the desire felt by two women for the same man that jeopardises their relationship and the possibility of a sorority. The common nineteenth-century assumption, however, was that women were naturally 'passionless' and 'had sex in the interests of procreation, marital harmony, or motherhood, but rarely ever in response to their own desire'. (Steinbach 2005: 114) Advocates of this concept included the doctor, William Acton, who impressed repeatedly upon readers 'the fact [...] that, in general, women do *not* feel any great sexual tendencies', and the historian Jules Michelet, who argued that while male instinct is rooted in 'le désir', for women, 'l'instinct de la maternité domine encore tout le reste'. (Acton 1862: 105, Michelet 1860) Authoritative voices gained the concept credibility, hence it was assumed that a sexual awakening was not a dominant feature of female development.

What is more, as the pinnacle of female destiny and fulfilment was thought to derive from motherhood within marriage, the sanctity of virtue barred women from the sexual experimentation required in the traditional male *Bildungsroman*. The novelists under discussion, however, show that these expectations do not preclude their texts from being considered as *Bildungsromane*. They defy received ideas about female 'passionlessness' by asserting the existence of desire as being bound up with female *Bildung* and include at least two romantic interests or suitors within their narratives. In all but *Jane Eyre*, the 'debasing' relationship is cemented by marriage, which suggests that the condoned path for women does not in all cases result in gratification. What can be inferred, therefore, is that these authors do not subscribe either to the belief that the ideal of womanhood is easily realisable, nor to the assumption that marriage is the universal objective of female self-fulfilment.

Through their depictions of the angst and frustration brought about by unhappy marriages, Sand, Flaubert and Hardy imply critical attitudes towards the permanence of the contract, or in Sue's case, the social ramifications of breaching it. It is by virtue of Jane's understanding of herself and the world that she develops a sense of duty which compels her to refute roles imposed on her that threaten to degrade her. As previously stated, this self-assertion is facilitated by reading and personal endeavour and reinforced by female companionship, but this is not to say that Brontë does not recognise the need for experimentation. In demonstrating the strength of social and sexual coercion the protagonists encounter, all four novels dramatise the tensions that arise when women cannot reconcile their personal aspirations to the requisites of social respectability. By centralising the experience of the woman, the novelists invite the nineteenth-century reader to consider events from her perspective; it is thus that they validate the female experience and encourage the reader to question the double standard. Because marriage was not considered to be the cornerstone of male worth, the traditional *Bildungsroman* allows time for different passions and identities to be pursued before the hero chooses to commit. This right to error, therefore, provides for a deeper self-knowledge than Valentine, Emma or Sue are able to establish before they realise the perils of ill-matched wedlock early in the narratives. By juxtaposing an 'exalting' relationship to the 'debasing' ones as in the traditional model, these novelists suggest the possibility of an alternative course that might be attainable if women were granted a process of trial and error as an essential element of *Bildung*.

The criteria these novelists lay out for the foundation of a truly 'exalting' or beneficial relationship suggests a refusal to accept Rousseau's idea that 'toute femme veuille plaire aux hommes et doive le vouloir'. (2009: 526) This implies not

only the subjection of woman to man, but that this subjection should be welcomed by the woman, who will dutifully accept her responsibility 'to render herself *agreeable* to her master [...] [as] the grand end of her existence'. (Wollstonecraft 2008: 150) On the contrary, in these novels, 'exalting' relationships, romantic and platonic, are formed on the basis of sound intellectual connections or sympathies which provide common ground for conversation rather than acceptance of male supremacy. It follows that by permitting women to educate themselves through reading and the development of their personal interests, the relationships they form can become fruitful because they are founded on the basis of equality. This counters both Rousseau's argument and Proudhon's declaration that '[e]ntre la femme et l'homme [...] il n'y a pas véritablement société'. (1966: 274)

It is through this self-directed education and reading that perceived barriers between sexes and classes are overcome. The ability 'to form bonds of culture that [efface] the occupational and material markers of class', and in this case gender, allows for the realisation of new relationships as envisaged by Humboldt's proposed communal education system. (Rodrick 2001: 39) While in the case of Valentine and Bénédict and Emma and Léon, the relationships are fuelled by intellectual sympathies as opposed to academic rigour, the intellectual prowess exhibited by Jane and Sue is incontrovertible. Not only do they prevail in their endeavours to cultivate their intellects against the odds posed by gender and class, but they prove themselves to be the equals, if not the superiors of their male counterparts in the fields of argument and analysis. In Jane and Sue, Brontë and Hardy represent female academics of a mental calibre that would suit university education. Women's access to university education, which began in the 1870s, was a gradual and painstaking process, not least due to the fact that scientific writings professing 'a marked inferiority of intellectual power' in women were still

being published late into the century. (Romanes 2001: 11) By foregrounding female intellectual attainment and potential in their narratives, Brontë and Hardy indicate a dismissive attitude to such arguments. This leads to the conclusion that if women are denied the space for intellectual cultivation in society, this cannot be attributed to their being unsuited to academic training. The examples of Jane and Sue suggest that the inadequacy lies with a society that is resistant to the accommodation of such talent on the basis of prejudice.

In the English novels, Brontë and Hardy present common activities associated with the 'accomplishments' as financially profitable skills on which Jane and Sue can base their independence. While they both incur judgement for either the quality or context of their work, reflecting the social tendency to weaponise accomplishments as a means of assessing a woman's worth, they do not indulge in them for performative reasons nor with the intention of attracting a husband. They engage in these activities as a form of mental occupation to satisfy an active mind. It is Jane's knowledge of French that makes her an eligible candidate for the position of Adèle's governess demonstrating the value of such a skill on the labour market, but equally, her inclination to paint allows her a form of self-expression which hones her powers of restraint and judgement. The range of skills that Sue exhibits suggests the breadth of her earning potential in a parallel life. Her ability to reproduce a sketch of the Jerusalem model and her aptitude in metalwork and painting cast her as the epitome of the type of woman that J.S. Mill refers to when lamenting society's refusal 'to make use of one-half of the whole quantity of talent it possesses'. (1989: 199)

In the French novels, however, 'accomplishments' are not represented as markers of talent, progress nor, indeed, as lucrative activities. Music in particular is

presented as being a symbol of class status which highlights the superficiality of its use and employment. Valentine discards her passion for music in favour of painting in order to avoid the duty of performance and the ensuing social judgement. This reflects that the need for self-suppression is greater than the need for self-expression here, and she is therefore unable to profit to the same extent as Jane. Once again, performance of class status is presented by Sand as the enemy of personal growth and inhibits the cultivation of an authentic identity. Emma, on the other hand, uses 'accomplishments' for the stereotypical purpose of attracting a husband. Charles is enthralled by her piano-playing, but once she has achieved her objective and finds herself with no worthy audience, she relinquishes it. Her enthusiasm is only revived when she uses piano lessons to conceal her affair with Léon, which emphasises simultaneously the theatrical and sexual connotations of the activity. While Flaubert makes it clear that she has no interest in self-cultivation through music, she does employ it as a form of self-assertion in order to drive her sexual agendas.

Although the motives for the practice of the 'accomplishments' are criticised more heavily in the French texts (as well as in *Jane Eyre* through Blanche Ingram), the French protagonists are still shown to harbour potential that could be capitalised on if the opportunity were available. Valentine and Louise demonstrate aptitude as teachers and nurses, which were among the first occupations that were opened to women, and Emma's ability to win prizes, understand opera and engineer schemes imply that her intellectual capacities are fundamentally sound, if undisciplined. Their academic potential is not depicted as being as vast as that of Jane or Sue, but their inherent capabilities rival those of the men around them and thus expose the fallacy of physiological reasoning for female inferiority.

All four novels highlight the predicament of the female protagonist who is unwilling or unable to suppress mental vigour, whether this be of an academic, imaginative or aspirational nature. Their frustrations reflect then-contemporary calls to broaden the scope of women's activity to reach beyond the confines of the private sphere to which they were relegated. While Smiles extols the virtues of 'healthy action' which bestows 'satisfaction and enjoyment' on the individual man, the absence of these qualities in the lives of the female protagonists is evident. (2002: 37-8) 'Certain it is that no bread eaten by man is so sweet as that earned by his own labour', he writes, indicating that man fulfilling a duty to himself by attending to all his own needs is the essence of the nourishment which underpins his survival and independence. (38) Women, however, both in these novels and in reality, were largely denied this kind of self-fulfilment celebrated by Smiles.

Josephine Butler uses a similar analogy in her exposition of the condition of governesses in 1868. Quoting one governess on her 'unquenched thirst for knowledge', she states: "'Worse than bodily privations or pains [...] are these *aches and pangs of ignorance*, [...] this sight of bread enough and to spare, but locked away from *us*, this depressing sense of miserable a [*sic.*] waste of powers bestowed on us by God"' (2001: 72) In other words, the inability to grow and act according to one's potential is a breach of responsibility towards oneself and towards God that hinders the individual more acutely than physical neglect. Ergo, mental employment and outlets for skills are essential to the overall nourishment and well-being of the individual.

This line of argument was also expressed in France by the women's rights advocate Juliette Adam, in her rebuttal of Proudhon: 'La femme étant un être humain, une *liberté organisée* comme l'homme, a le droit de déployer ses facultés

physiques, intellectuelles et morales, d'obéir son être, de faire son sort'. (1858: 195) To deny a woman the means to deploy her faculties is to deny her a fundamental quality of being human. In Adam's view, the route to obtain equality in self-expression is evident: 'Il faut donner aux femmes une éducation sérieuse, et autant que possible, une éducation professionnelle. [...] Le travail a seul émancipé les hommes, le travail seul peut émanciper les femmes'. (100) In essence, her arguments concur with those of Smiles, reflecting the nineteenth-century preoccupation with work as a validation of the self; what differentiates them is Smiles's failure to include women in his movement.

The thirst for mental employment, academic and otherwise, is integral to all the protagonists under consideration. Valentine relishes the chance to engage herself in teaching and practical tasks in the Lhéry household which liberate her from the constraints of her class; Emma retaliates against her lack of purpose in an attempt to overcome the impotence that prevents her from realising her aspirations; and Sue exercises her versatility through study, analysis, argument and not least by demonstrating her aptitude on the labour market. In contrast to social expectations, none of these authors represents female contentment as synonymous with inaction within domestic dependence.

Brontë's implied resentment towards society's hindrance of female expression through action is conveyed explicitly through the frustrations Jane experiences in her role as governess:

Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need expertise for their faculties, and a field for their efforts [...]. It

is thoughtless to condemn them [...] if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex. (109)

This suggests an alignment between Brontë's stance and the trajectory of nineteenth-century feminist thought despite her novel being the only one to culminate in a happy marriage. The successful course of Jane's *Bildung* is only possible through her insistence upon autonomy and what Aleksandar Stević calls a 'kinetic obsession'. (2020: 83) She gains an understanding of social mechanisms through private reading, finds solace in female support in moments of weakness, moves on when environments no longer benefit her, rejects unfavourable and inauthentic identities and finally embarks on marriage at a stage in her development where she has acquired an in-depth knowledge of herself.

This said, the culmination of Jane's *Bildungsroman* is reliant upon compromise. Her marriage to Rochester as his equal, though she sees herself as such, is contingent on his loss of capital and physical faculties, creating a reversal of dependence. Furthermore, in the secluded domestic situation that she finds herself in at the end of the novel, she is not as vulnerable to social criticism as the other protagonists, and therefore, her acceptance into broader society is not a foregone conclusion. As Stević suggests, Jane's path consists in 'rejecting the unconditional surrender to the forces of patriarchal oppression, yet nonetheless embracing the institutional framework of a middle-class marriage'. (2020: 89) From Brontë's presentation of an idealistic alternative to self-renunciation, which does not reject marriage as a Victorian institution, it can be concluded that a significant degree of social isolation is required to achieve success in the forms endorsed by the *Bildungsroman* genre.

The other protagonists, though they achieve something of Jane's autonomy, are not accommodated by the societies in which they move. There is a negative correlation between the development of self-knowledge and the social opportunities available: greater self-knowledge constitutes an awakening which highlights the incompatibility of this self with the world. It is through instances of authentic or experimental self-expression that Valentine, Emma and Sue feel the net of convention tighten around them, not least because they marry prematurely. The reader is made to feel the frustration of these heroines who, irrespective of the degree of development and autonomy they achieve, increasingly feel their exclusion from society at large. They struggle against the same conservative forces, here represented by marriage, that impede the articulation of woman as an inherently sexual, intellectually capable and dynamic entity. The inference to be drawn here is that the 'educated' and self-defined woman cannot expect integration into society on her own terms; such a process requires sacrifice, either through self-effacement or self-destruction. Whereas the trajectory of the traditional *Bildungsroman* is linear, accepting the path of male autonomy by anticipating error, society's intolerance of the erring woman forces a circular course of development.

Interestingly, the female-authored novels envisage a more hopeful future beyond the conclusion of the narratives, based on the formation of new female communities and the mixing of classes. Jane and Louise (after Valentine's death) show promise as educators of Miss Temple's calibre in situations which offer a new sense of social diversity. The implication is that disposing of class prejudices provides a more nurturing environment for an effective domestic education. Brontë and Sand both suggest that education will be a priority in these homes; there is hope for little Valentine, Adèle and Jane's own children to thrive within

environments underpinned by female intellect and emotional support that serve a similar function to the female communities in their novels. Any such sense of a brighter future is absent in Hardy and Flaubert's texts, however: Sue's children are sacrificed and Emma's daughter is left to an impoverished aunt and obliged to work in a cotton mill. By demonstrating the lasting social repercussions of society's failure to accommodate women, these novels are arguably more critical of the established order and its effects on future generations.

These four texts, though a limited sample, suggest the general evolution towards realism in novels which would subsequently be debated or classifiable as *Bildungsromane* due to their preoccupation with individual development and social obstacles interacting with such development. The emergence of Naturalism in the arts in the latter half of the nineteenth century could account in part for the bleaker conclusions of the male-authored texts, which were both published after 1848. Neither Hardy nor Flaubert romanticises or idealises the position or prospects of their protagonists. Rather, they depict the real-life consequences of exploration of the values celebrated by Romanticism. Expression of a non-conformist female identity is demonstrated as being unrealisable within the social context and amidst the constraints on women in England and France in the second half of the nineteenth century. Their creation of these characters is clearly not motivated by criticism of women who aim to develop identities outside the boundaries of traditional female roles, but by a criticism of a society that does not allow for the fruits of such development to be successfully integrated. This is evidently an option that is available to the male protagonists of earlier *Bildungsromane*.

Based on this selection, the nineteenth-century female *Bildungsroman* entails a narrowing of the playing field. Successful *Bildung* requires a sympathetic social

context which, with the exception of *Jane Eyre*, is unattainable for these protagonists. The *Bildungsroman* in these cases challenges rather than assuages the assumptions of English and French society. By making women's experience the subject of works of art, these authors validate female development and 'education' in all its facets and thus encourage the reader to sympathise with their protagonists' plight. Although some *Bildungsroman* critics, such as Harmut Steinecke, argue that including 'the impossibility of *Bildung* and its parody' within the genre would render it 'far too general', this would largely signal the exclusion of female protagonists from consideration within the framework. (1991: 94) Having considered these novels as female *Bildungsromane*, Stević's inclusive approach to the genre is better placed to capture the crisis of individualism of a century in which 'becoming someone [...] [was] a perpetual moving target'. (2020: 184) It is precisely through its failure to satisfy readers with happy endings that the female *Bildungsroman* evokes the tensions of the period: 'It is a form that speaks most vocally when it offers partial answers and suspect solutions'. (Stević 2020: 184)

The frustrations and dilemmas experienced by the heroines of these nineteenth-century novels are still the reality of many girls and women globally in the twenty-first century, particularly those for whom education is barred or interrupted by issues such as sexual or political violence, environmental disaster and poor access to healthcare. Organisations such as USAID, UNICEF and Action Aid, which promote equal education as a key tool in tackling global poverty, publicise the link between a fundamental lack of education for girls and the likelihood of child marriage, teenage pregnancy and the possibility of infant mortality. 'The future of our world is only as bright as our girls', recognises the Obama Foundation, yet in 2018, before the COVID-19 pandemic, '98 million

adolescent girls around the world [were] not in school.’ (Obama Girls Opportunity Alliance, Obama Foundation Report 2018) However, the continuing threat female education poses to established patriarchal structures is evidenced by the experience of Pakistani activist Malala Yousafzai, whose support of education for girls nearly cost her her life at the hands of the Taliban in 2012. As a survivor, she now joins other figures such as Jacinda Ardern and Michelle Obama in advocating and facilitating further progress in the field of girls’ education from a global platform. Cases such as that of Malala, however, are just the tip of the iceberg in the ongoing struggle against gender inequality, although the press coverage of her attack may lead readers to assume the incident was isolated and exceptional. Barriers to female *Bildung* in the modern world forge a connection between these girls and the protagonists of the novels that have been discussed, demonstrating the prescience and enduring relevance of the authors. By using their art to express the female plight, they laid the foundations to combat the struggles of today: female education was, and continues to be, the key to potential and the antidote to oppression.

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