

made a major contribution to Brontë studies and indicated the way forward for further studies of Brontë's work within Victorian cultural debate.

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## Response

### Sally Shuttleworth

When reading reviews of your own work, it is often the case that you end up wondering whether the critic was actually reading the same book. This is certainly not the case here: all three reviews thoroughly enter into the spirit of the work and engage deeply with the arguments presented. After three such positive reviews, it seems almost churlish to respond; important points and methodological issues are raised, however, that I would like to address.

Rylance suggests at one point that my use of Foucault is opportunistic. In many ways this is not a Foucauldian book. The Foucauldian model of dominant discourse is inadequate to the extent that it does not address the questions of who had access to these discourses, in what form, and to what effects? These questions are particularly pertinent with reference to a study of Charlotte Brontë where one still has to combat the much-cherished myths of her cultural isolation. I sought, therefore, through intensive local research, to build up a picture of the local intellectual and cultural community to which Brontë belonged. Even here, however, there are problems: it is not always possible to state which books Brontë borrowed, which lectures she attended. Then, there are the problems of linking such local research to the national picture. Rylance suggests that I have created an impression of a "compliant self-repeating discursive formation stretching from the metropolitan establishment to the platform of the Haworth Mechanics' Institute." In moving from local configurations of ideas to their expression in metropolitan culture, I realise that I probably have not sufficiently highlighted other competing theories. Similarly, I should probably have explained more clearly that I was not covering the entire field of Victorian psychology, but only those areas I see as impinging particularly on Brontë's work. That said, I hope I have shown that Brontë's relations to these discursive formations were neither passive nor straightforward. I was especially concerned to demonstrate the ways in which she negotiates in her work the contradictory models of femininity and selfhood as they found expression in her local culture.

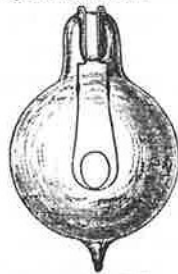
Both Rylance and Flint take issue, in different ways, with my assertion that in *Villette* Brontë "finally, tentatively, asserts the claims of the realm of the imagination." Rylance wishes to save me from endorsing either a reactionary Romanticism or the "celebratory essentialism" of a Cixous, while Flint, by contrast, would like me to think further about the feminist forms of Brontë's writing with its play of imagination and rhythms of desire. I would nonetheless stand by my original statement: the play of imagination is, of course, crucial in all of Brontë's work, but in *Villette* she explicitly (rather than implicitly) addresses the question of its conflict with masculine reason and science. The endorsement is tentative, however; imagination is no redemptive force

able to free Lucy from the pressures of the "rude Real," but rather a temporary respite. Lucy, as a white-haired old lady, remains trapped by the past, condemned to rehearse once again her tale, with all its subterfuges and evasions.

The role of psychoanalysis in my text is also addressed by Rylance and Flint. Part of the impetus lying behind the book is an impatience with the forms of historical amnesia which would have all understanding of sexuality, neurosis or the unconscious starting with Freud. Critics of Brontë often celebrate her writing as being outside its time: without denying the originality of her work, I would nonetheless wish to demonstrate that its very strengths lie in its grappling with the mid-nineteenth-century theories of subjectivity and sexuality. I am wary of a form of psychoanalytic criticism that does not recognise the historical foundations of its own methodology. That is not to suggest, however, that I think it would be inappropriate to employ psychoanalytic categories of analysis in my text, as an earlier reader suggested. As a methodological tool, psychoanalysis can clearly be employed to illuminate texts from any literary period. The peculiar difficulty in this study lay in maintaining the clarity of the historical focus. The dialogue between current and historical psychological theory remains, as Flint suggests, tacit, but could well now be developed to advantage.

Alexander, Flint and Rylance all point to areas of omission, or to partial emphasis, all of which I agree with. The original, probably overly self-indulgent manuscript of 300,000 words (before it was progressively slimmed down to its current leaner and, hopefully, fitter 120,000), contained analyses of Jane's painting; of grotesque representations of children and dead mothers; of portraiture in relation to physiognomy and phrenology; of the bodily geography of Victorian cities; and of excision. Possibly, I attempted to maintain too tight a focus in cutting and redrafting. I would like to think, however, that in my final text I have laid the groundwork for exploration of these areas.

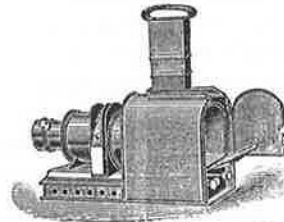
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