

WHY IS THERE SO MUCH FRENCH IN *VILLETTE*?

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Since at least the Norman conquest, good style in English has depended on a *souçon* of French. Every attentive writer of English knows that an occasional dash of French adds a *je ne sais quoi*. In the nineteenth century, much English prose contains a smattering of French, while some works include many—sometimes too many—French words. Anglophone writers in the Victorian period often traveled to French-speaking countries and some were intensely interested in French politics and culture. To name only the most prominent examples, these include William Makepeace Thackeray, Charlotte Brontë, Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins, Algernon Charles Swinburne, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Oscar Wilde. These authors both read French and, to a surprising extent, wrote in French. Sometimes this writing consists of single French words or phrases in a work that is otherwise in English, while at others it is commercial or amatory correspondence; at still other times it involves translations from the French, or even (as in the case of Wilde's *Salomé* [1893]) composition of a complete original work in French. The uses to which these writers put French are especially vexed when their command of the language is partial or uneasy. Genuinely bilingual writers like George du Maurier and Ouida, who belonged more completely to both cultures, can, for these purposes, be put to one side, as can Henry James, whose relation to French culture is itself a book-length subject.¹ Writers who are perfectly fluent in both languages do not betray the productive discomfort of those who seem out of their depth in foreign waters.

For a variety of historical and cultural reasons, French is highly charged for English speakers, in terms of its political associations with democracy, revolution, and military and colonial rivalry, as well as in terms of its erotic possibilities as a signifier of libertinism, sophistication, and freedom. This volatile combination contributes to the terror and the lure of the French language for English speakers, feelings that are most in evidence when a writer's mastery of French is uncertain. A language only partially known occasions fantasies about what that language is, how it works, and who one is in it. I call this peculiar relationship to the language "intermediate French," a term meant

to signal both an incomplete fluency and the purposes the language serves as an intermediary: between national identities, between idealizing and abjecting fantasies, and between feelings of belonging and those of alienation. In contrast to forms of British selfhood that can seem unmediated or transparent, the intermediate offers an enticingly self-alienating, culturally disruptive, stuttering non-knowledge that is registered in and as French. Intermediate forms of French sponsor ways of being that are at once defensive of and liberated from British nationality and mores. For all of these writers, French is also a language in which they imagine losing themselves in extramarital love that would be impermissible at home—and perhaps losing themselves altogether. For to function less than fluently in a foreign language is to lose one's grip on crucial claims to knowledge and being, most especially for a professional writer. To become French, in particular, in this English fantasy—even temporarily—is to give up a secure sense of self in favor of a world of art, fashion, and luxury, and to flirt with dangerous forms of political engagement.

I am interested in what meanings, beyond denotative ones, adhere to the French words and phrases that appear in the writing of English-speaking Victorian authors. A first response would be that French testifies to an English writer's social class, cultural prestige, and educational attainment—in short, it provides signs of cultural capital. A second answer would address the display of that capital not only in class terms, but also within the geopolitical contexts of imperial competition. By contrast with the power ordinarily ascribed to the English language in colonial and postcolonial settings, an English-speaking writer's use of an inadequately mastered French language has destabilizing effects. Such French usage is the language of neither political subjugation nor imperial domination, as it might be under other circumstances. A third set of answers about the meanings of French arises from the perspective of a history of the emotions. French, in this regard, is exigent, alluring, and rigorous. The French—at least in the stereotype of English speakers—excel at humiliating foreigners who attempt to use their language, demanding absolute correctness and relishing the castigation of faults. For many Anglophone writers, French words offer affective traces, of longing in relation to a culture and a nation both proximate to and profoundly different from their own—one that they find both desirable and frightening. A fourth and final set of considerations (on which this article will concentrate in its latter sections) concerns the relationship between narrative discourse and represented contents when language itself is unstable. The introduction

of French disturbs the correspondence between words and things and has effects in particular on dialogue, traditionally regarded as the most transparent and reliable element of prose fiction.

While many readers in the Victorian period would have been competent in French, foreign-language education varied widely by class, gender, region, and period. From internal evidence it is clear that novelists understood their readers would have a range of experiences of the French language. Among the works central to any inquiry into the role of French in Victorian literature are Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) and *Little Dorrit* (1857), Thackeray's *Paris Sketchbook* (1840) and his novels with French scenes and characters, Wilde's *Salomé*, and Brontë's novels. In this essay, I have limited myself to Brontë, focusing on *Villette*, the canonical Victorian novel that contains more French than any other, with a glance at some of Brontë's other writing. Brontë's knowledge of French is rooted in her travel to Brussels in 1842, at the age of 26, for two years of language instruction. While there, she evidently developed a passion for her married Belgian teacher, Constantin Heger. In the surviving letters to him, Brontë professes both her wish to improve her language skills and her ideas about the ways in which such skills will improve her. All four of Brontë's novels contain scenes of foreign language instruction; all might be understood as bilingual works, in the sense that they contain French characters, settings, and passages—sometimes a phrase or a sentence, sometimes whole paragraphs. It might be unfair to characterize Brontë's French as intermediate, for her skills in the written language are strong—as the extant essays from her period of Belgian tutelage attest—and she strove to improve her abilities afterwards.² Her expertise in French writing surpasses Dickens's, whose French correspondence is filled with errors even as he boasts in those letters about his facility in speaking French.³ But however accomplished, Brontë is hardly at home as a French writer in the way she is in English. She could never take the stylistic chances in French that she could in English, and, if her French is correct, it is not entirely comfortable: it always has the feeling of having been translated.⁴

In what follows, I begin by establishing some components of Brontë's French usage in the novels she published prior to *Villette*, considering its effects on narrative design, prose style, and characters' self-presentation. I then take up the cultural capital, in its psychological and national dimensions, as well as the affective attachments, invoked by French, in Brontë's last novel, along with the letters in which she expresses her feelings about the language. As we look more closely

at the effects of French on narration, and specifically on dialogue, in *Villette*, a set of stylistic and erotic disorientations emerges. In the course of unmooring the referential capacity of narrative discourse (and especially quoted speech), French usage in Brontë's English prose throws into doubt conventional distinctions between first- and third-person narration and between direct and indirect styles. Such categories, which serve as the traditional basis both for narrative analysis and for the distinctiveness of prose fiction, become precarious in the face of these foreign elements, necessitating a new set of tools for understanding narrative reading practices.

Even in *Jane Eyre*, published in 1848, the least French of Brontë's novels, the narrator not only notes her own competence in French but ensures that the reader experiences it too. Early in the novel's second chapter, for instance, she states, with respect to her younger self, "The fact is, I was a trifle beside myself; or rather *out* of myself, as the French would say."⁵ In portraying her childhood pique, Jane relies on a reader's recognition of the non-alignment between English and French prepositions in the idiom that describes the paradigmatic situation of a retrospective narrator: being displaced, in space and time, from possession of oneself (and the anger or irritation that might result). In English, one is beside oneself; in French, *hors de soi*. If Jane uses French both to describe and to perform her self-alienation, the destabilizing effects of the language, as it moves into the novel's foreground, increase proportionately. Once she grows up—moves out of herself in a different sense—Jane becomes governess to Adèle Varens, and this employment provides the occasion for the narrator to display her knowledge. When Adèle appears, she speaks a French whose childishness evidently renders it unnecessary to translate. Mrs. Fairfax effects their introduction:

"Come and speak to the lady who is to teach you, and to make you a clever woman some day." She approached.

"C'est là ma gouvernante?" said she, pointing to me, and addressing her nurse; who answered: "Mais oui, certainement."

"Are they foreigners?" I inquired, amazed at hearing the French language. . . .

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. . . .

“Ah!” cried she, in French, “you speak my language as well as Mr. Rochester does: I can talk to you as I can to him, and so can Sophie. She will be glad: nobody here understands her: Madame Fairfax is all English. . . . And Mademoiselle—what is your name?”

“Eyre—Jane Eyre.”

“Aire? Bah! I cannot say it.”⁶

The scene reverses the usual charge for a governess, to teach French to English children; here, the French-speaking child hails the English adult, showing off the latter’s knowledge to advantage. Putting French in the mouth of a child allows the reader with even a modicum of familiarity to navigate it with ease, though it would tend to “put out” readers not so favored by making them feel more ignorant even than an eight-year-old. But Jane tells us a little too much about her own fluency in French, as if to defend against a reader’s wonder that so provincial a character should seem so worldly. She makes a point of displaying a corresponding incompetency on the part of the French child whose accent singularly disables her from pronouncing that name repeated so insistently throughout the book, from the title on down.

The language lessons here provided—both in the narration and in the narrated scene—demonstrate some of the uses to which Brontë characteristically puts French: it offers a display of cultural prestige; it mimetically enacts for the reader both the character’s claims to knowledge and her subservience; and it draws on a conventional British image repertoire that contrasts lax French morals with upright English ones. Like the protagonist of *Jane Eyre*, the narrator of Brontë’s next novel, *Shirley*, of 1849, projects urbanity, but with the difference that, alone among her novels, it is told in the third person. The disembodiment of the narrator does little, however, to diminish the ostentatiousness of bilingual displays. In the opening chapter, for example, following one of the curates’ landladies in free indirect style, we read, “now, on Thursday, they are both here at dinner, and she is almost certain they will stay all night. ‘C’en est trop,’ she would say, if she could speak French.”⁷ This gratuitous authorial flaunting of *le mot juste* is at odds with the decidedly uncosmopolitan character in whose mouth it is so demonstratively not put. The landlady, who does not speak French, would more likely simply say, “It’s too much.” This discordance is of a piece not only with the linguistic instability of Brontë’s narrators in general but also with their penchant for unpredictable flashes of aggression at their readers. As with the other French moments, the phrase serves to mark a confusion or befuddling of selfhood, a being put out.

The adoption of a third-person narrator in *Shirley* affords Brontë layers of play between dialogue and narration and, simultaneously, between languages—effects, as we will see, that *Villette* amplifies. In a scene between the bilingual Robert Moore and his French-speaking sister Hortense, the dialogue includes her line, “Eh, bien! Tu ne déjeûnes pas ce matin?”, and the narrator interposes: “The answer and the rest of the conversation was in French, but as this is an English book, I shall translate it into English.”⁸ So far, so good: the reader who might not have caught the line (and so missed breakfast) can feel relieved. Yet almost immediately, Robert replies in a form of English so unidiomatic as to be striking: “I have a canine hunger.”⁹ This awkward phrase keeps in the mind’s ear an idea that the language being spoken is different from the one being read, alluding to (without quite translating) the idiom “j’ai une faim de loup.” The statement “I have a canine hunger” signals that it is a paraphrase of words not being uttered; otherwise, why not adopt a perfectly ordinary English expression like “I’m as hungry as a wolf” or “I could eat a horse”? Even this allusion to French speech, however, does not suffice: despite the narrator’s concession to English readers, a page or two later the dialogue resumes with this bilingual passage:

“Quelle idée! to destroy them. Quelle action honteuse! On voyait bien que les ouvriers de ce pays étaient à la fois bêtes et méchants. C’était absolument comme les domestiques Anglais, les servantes surtout: rien d’insupportable comme cette Sara, par exemple!”

“She looks clean and industrious,” Mr. Moore remarked.

“Looks! I don’t know how she looks; and I do not say that she is altogether dirty or idle: mais elle est d’une insolence! She disputed with me a quarter of an hour yesterday. . . . You are in the same position with your workmen,—pauvre cher frère!”

“I am afraid you are not very happy in England, Hortense.”¹⁰

As if to exemplify the different styles of nationality, the scene enacts their different languages. But unlike the sharp opposition the characters feel between cultures, the dialogue mingles their languages promiscuously. In a letter to her editor while this novel was in production, Brontë writes, “I return the Proof-sheets—Will they print all the French phrases in Italics? I hope not; it makes them look somehow obtrusively conspicuous.”¹¹ Playing down and disavowing, in typographic terms, the obtrusive French that, within the narration, she is at such pains to broadcast, Brontë hopes to achieve on the page just the commingling of French and English that, as she anticipates, some readers will find aggravating.

The use of French in *Villette* is of a different order of magnitude than in Brontë's two prior novels. This difference is attributable in part to its setting, mainly in the French-speaking Labassecour, a fictionalized Belgium, and in part to its autobiographical resonances. French has functions in *Villette* that are correspondingly greater, particularly in the relationship the novel posits between the narration and the narrative materials. Its first word of French occurs as the narrator, Lucy Snowe, prepares for her sea journey:

Foreigners say that it is only English girls who can thus be trusted to travel alone, and deep is their wonder at the daring confidence of English parents and guardians. As for the "jeunes Miss," by some their intrepidity is pronounced masculine and "inconvenant," others regard them as the passive victims of an educational and theological system which wantonly dispenses with proper "surveillance." (59)

In juxtaposing predictable attitudes of the English and Europeans toward one another, the narrator cites nameless "foreigners" whose quotation combines a French word ("jeunes") with an English one ("Miss," which in some editions appears as a French-accented "Meess").¹² Otherwise, the foreigners' sentiments are quoted indirectly, rendered in the narrator's standard English, apart from two individual words that retain their ostensibly original French ("inconvenant" and, one presumes, "surveillance"). In this case, French terms are marked out and, although untranslated, indicated as departures from the language of the narration. These foreign words, moreover, foretell in miniature some of the themes Lucy will encounter in the French-speaking world she here approaches: the conventionality of gender distinctions, the regulation of young women's behavior, and the vigilant attention given to questions of seeing and being seen.

This minimal mixture of languages soon becomes more elaborate, as Lucy converses with her new acquaintance, Ginevra Fanshawe. When Lucy asks if she will be seasick, Ginevra replies, "Oh, immensely! as soon as ever we get in sight of the sea: I begin, indeed, to feel it already. I shall go below; and won't I order about that fat, odious stewardess. Heureusement je sais faire aller mon monde" (62). This is the first complete French sentence in the novel; it is fully reported and unmarked in the text.¹³ The effortless transition from English to French in the dialogue gestures toward the cosmopolitan multilingualism presumed of the character, the controlling narrator, and the reader. That the novel actually reports one sentence in French might lead a reader to imagine that the prior sentences must have been

spoken in English, and it provides one model for representing multiple languages: rendering them in their original form.¹⁴ The character Lucy, reporting from within the diegesis, does not yet know enough French to understand this sentence, let alone to transcribe it accurately. If in one regard this mixture presents a problem for the reader trying to make sense of the language within the represented scene, in another it is not any more illogical than the ordinary condition of a narrator reporting verbatim past events as they unfold. In other words, peering into the peculiarity of this arrangement only points out the conventions of retrospective narration—and of fictionality itself—whereby readers accept the internal plausibility of a world they know full well to be invented. The question of why, at any given moment, the language used by a character should mix in some particular way with that of the narrator itself belongs to a wider set of moves—which is so much a part of the experience of reading *Villette*—that fractures characters' selfhood across intervals of time and space.

In some places, the text provides internal explanations for its play with languages. Asserting that a certain rule governs when words will be translated might produce the impression that a system is in place. For example, on finding the casket in the "allée défendue" (119), Lucy reads the note inside and comments:

This then was no billet-doux; and it was in settled conviction to the contrary that I quietly opened it. Thus it ran—I translate:—

"Angel of my dreams! . . . you seemed to think the enterprise beset with such danger—the hour so untimely, the alley so strictly secluded—often, you said, haunted by that dragon, the English teacher—une véritable bégueule Britannique à ce que vous dites—espèce de monstre, brusque et rude comme un vieux caporal de grenadiers, et revêche comme une religieuse" (the reader will excuse my modesty in allowing this flattering sketch of my amiable self to retain the slight veil of the original tongue). (123)¹⁵

Having pledged to translate the note, Lucy ceases to do so at a certain point, invoking a previously unannounced rule of propriety that preserves the insults in their original form. As with Ginevra's line, this is a relatively straightforward instance of language mixing, since it provides evidence of an original French text. At least for those readers who can understand them, the French phrases mock Lucy, but retaining the "slight veil of the original tongue" provides a layer of facetious "modesty" that enables the narrator to turn the tables on her detractors. It is as if to say, "Nothing of me stands between you,

reader, and those who would defame me. See them do their worst and then judge whether I, Lucy Snowe, am yet in the right.”¹⁶

Yet such a rule hardly serves to cover every instance of French in the novel. Liberally sprinkling English prose with foreign phrases is one technique for evoking the use of multiple languages in the diegesis, since they cannot be fully represented as they are understood to have been spoken, even for an English novelist so willing to plunge her readers into French as Charlotte Brontë. By contrast, a nineteenth-century Russian novel like *War and Peace* (1869) is truly bilingual, depending on characters and readers to move seamlessly between Russian and French dialogue. In English fiction, such a mixture is gestural, a continual reminder that what we are reading does not precisely correspond with what is imagined to have been spoken. Brontë plays with these conventions, even at the moments when she seems to be taking them in hand most firmly. When, for example, Mme. Beck looks Lucy over while considering her for employment, and then calls in M. Paul to perform a reading of her physiognomy, the narrator interrupts her report of the conversation to state parenthetically: “I shall go on with this part of my tale as if I had understood all that passed; for though it was then scarce intelligible to me, I heard it translated afterwards” (73). This apparently generous concession to an Anglophone readership lasts only a sentence or two, however. The dialogue between Mme. Beck and M. Paul—itself on the topic of reading and interpretation—ceaselessly reminds us that the conversation we read has a postulated French original:

“Mon cousin,” began madame, “I want your opinion. We know your skill in physiognomy; use it now. Read that countenance.” . . .
“I read it,” he pronounced.
“Et qu’en dites vous?”
“Mais—bien des choses,” was the oracular answer. . . .
“She is a stranger?”
“An Englishwoman, as one may see.”
“She speaks French?”
“Not a word.”
“She understands it?”
“No.” (73–74)

Having proposed to present a translation of this conversation, why should the dialogue slide back to the supposed original? One might conjecture that the French words are tags meant not to confound the realism but rather to enhance it, by helping us keep in mind that what

we are reading is a translation or a superimposition of one language on the other. Not for Brontë Dickens's elision of foreign terms in *A Tale of Two Cities*, which, though it contains hardly a word of French, offers a tortured imitation of French syntax using English diction to convey the idea that characters in the book's Parisian sections are speaking a different language than that of the novel itself.¹⁷ Lucy Snowe's use of French is more than just evocative. It antagonizes readers, contributing to the feeling that we are being toyed with by this narrator's infamously coy and evasive handling of her materials. Here too, a mimetic justification might be posited, insofar as the non-Francophone reader recapitulates Lucy's bewilderment in witnessing the character's inability to understand the language. Brontë was manifestly unconcerned with helping her reader. In a letter to her publisher after the novel had appeared, she jests about "an old acquaintance of [her] Father's" who inquired of an editor whether "the 'French phrases' in 'Villette'—about which the worthy old gentleman has already several times expressed himself a good deal disturbed[—]shall be translated in foot-notes in a new edition. I can't say that this suggestion quite meets my ideas—but however as the New Edition is itself a thing in limbo—I need not discuss the point."¹⁸ Like the letter to her editor about *Shirley*, this one hints that Brontë did not mind irritating her readers with her use of French. And indeed an early reviewer characterized *Shirley* as being written "half in French and half in broad Yorkshire."¹⁹

Beyond the evocative and mimetic purposes they serve, the uses of French resonate both with personal meanings that for Brontë adhered to the language and with its wider cultural associations in the period. When Lucy arrives in Villette, for instance, she falls into the characteristic problems of the disoriented tourist:

And my portmanteau, with my few clothes and little pocket-book enclasp[ing] the remnant of my fifteen pounds, where were they?

I ask this question now, but I could not ask it then. I could say nothing whatever; not possessing a phrase of *speaking* French: and it was French, and French only, the whole world seemed now gabbling round me. *What* should I do? Approaching the conductor, I just laid my hand on his arm, pointed to a trunk, thence to the diligence-roof, and tried to express a question with my eyes. He misunderstood me, seized the trunk indicated, and was about to hoist it on the vehicle.

"Let that alone—will you?" said a voice in good English; then, in correction, "Qu'est ce que vous faites donc? Cette malle est à moi." [What are you doing there? That trunk is mine.]

But I had heard the Fatherland accents; they rejoiced my heart; I turned:

“Sir,” said I, appealing to the stranger, without in my distress noticing what he was like, “I cannot speak French. May I entreat you to ask this man what he has done with my trunk?”

Without discriminating, for the moment, what sort of face it was to which my eyes were raised and on which they were fixed, I felt in its expression half-surprise at my appeal and half-doubt of the wisdom of interference. . . . Forthwith he took the conductor under hand, and I felt, through all the storm of French which followed, that he raked him fore and aft. (68–69)

This is a conventional comic scenario of a flustered traveler feeling vulnerable on arrival in a foreign land. For Lucy, the comedy has a dark side too, for she is especially endangered by virtue of her gender and class, and she is accordingly taken advantage of by the coachman who discards her luggage. By eliding the difference between character and narrator, Brontë dramatizes the experience of disorientation. It is a scene of multiple misrecognitions. Lucy says twice that she is so flustered she does not really see her interlocutor and therefore does not register him as the Graham Bretton of her youth; nor, when she subsequently encounters him as Dr. John at the *pensionnat*, does she admit to recognizing him as the kind Englishman who helped her here. For all the confusion induced by linguistic incapacity at this moment of arrival, it takes Lucy (as Jane Eyre would say) out of herself, obviating her usual diffidence. The sound of an English voice evokes in her an unwonted boldness when encountering an attractive, unfamiliar man, temporarily blinding her to him.

Brontë’s letters contain a related episode that she reports to a friend. Longing for the conversation and stylistic discipline that she enjoyed from her Belgian teacher, Brontë feels so bereft at the absence of French once she has returned to Yorkshire that she leaps at the words when she hears them. Writing to Ellen Nussey in 1845, Brontë cautions her friend to be wary of a certain lady’s man and then describes an encounter with a stranger on a train:

I got home very well—There was a gentleman in the rail-road carriage whom I recognized by his features immediately as a foreigner and a Frenchman—so sure was I of it that I ventured to say to him in French “Monsieur est français n’est-ce pas?” He gave a start of surprise and answered immediately in his own tongue. [H]e appeared still more astonished & even puzzled when after a few minutes further conversation—I enquired if he had not passed the greater part of his life in Germany[.] He said the surmise was correct—I had guessed it from his speaking French with the German accent.²⁰

The sound of the French language provokes Brontë to overcome her ordinary reserve and approach an unknown man. Several months later, she alludes to this episode when writing to Heger himself, complaining bitterly of not having heard from him and describing her “painful efforts to endure until now the privation [she] imposed on [herself]”: namely, to resist the urge to communicate with him.²¹ The letter itself—the last surviving one to Heger—is composed in French. Like a miniature version of Wilde’s *De Profundis* (1897), it is the kind of missive one writes to a foresworn love but ought not send (as Lucy herself demonstrates in deciding not to post a passionate letter to Dr. John). Using the French language that binds them, Brontë sounds out M. Heger in a form of amorous *devoir*. Then a plaintive postscript is appended in English:

I must say one word to you in English—I wish I could write to you more cheerful letters, for when I read this over, I find it to be somewhat gloomy. . . . You will perceive by the defects in this letter that I am forgetting the French language—yet I read all the French books I can get, and learn daily a portion by heart—but I have never heard French spoken but once since I left Brussels—and then it sounded like music in my ears—every word was most precious to me because it reminded me of you—I love French for your sake with all my heart and soul.²²

At this moment of passionate intensity, Brontë abjures the French over which she has labored so assiduously. To reflect directly on her relationship to the French language, she adopts a position exterior to it, offering these comments in English—just as Lucy reports in English impossible dialogue such as “She speaks French? Not a word” (74). It is tempting to regard this postscript as the key that unlocks the madness of Brontë’s French usage: the statement “I love French for your sake with all my heart and soul” conveys the overlapping forms of erotic, linguistic, and national sentiment that impel the use of French throughout her published fiction. It is a sentence that cannot be written in French. While the content conveys her strong desire for that language, the form (that is, the English) indicates the fear associated with French expression. “I love French for your sake” is her way of saying to M. Heger, “I love you.” But it is also the reverse—that is, “I love you for the sake of French.” It is a writer’s passionate expression of gratitude to her teacher for having given her the gift of language; it is not simply that she loves the language so as to get close to him, but that she loves him because he has made the language she loves available to her. For to learn a language, one may have to fall in love with it. In an essay titled “Words from Abroad,” Theodor Adorno writes:

Since language is erotically charged in its words, at least for the kind of person who is capable of expression, love drives us to foreign words. . . . The early craving for foreign words is like the craving for foreign and if possible exotic girls; what lures us is a kind of exogamy of language, which would like to escape from the sphere of what is always the same, the spell of what one is and knows anyway. At that time foreign words made us blush, like saying the name of a secret love.²³

In spite of its retrograde expression, Adorno's reverie suggests the Proustian excitement that arises from a collation of the erotic and the exotic in the realm of language.

The idea that the sound of French might itself be a source of erotic enticement is suggestive about how we read the profusion of French in *Villette*. If French rings in Brontë's ears like M. Heger's voice, the deformation of novelistic dialogue by the mixture of languages can be read through the filter of her fantasy. Yet learning French was also essential to her career as a writer—to her conception of a career in writing. The entanglement of her passion for the language with her professional ambitions is evident in an earlier letter to Heger. After explaining how she fears forgetting French and how, for the sake of hoping to see him again, she (like Jane Eyre) memorizes a passage of colloquial French every day, she states:

[J]'écrivais un livre et je le dédierais à mon maître de littérature—au seul maître que j'ai jamais eu—à vous Monsieur. Je vous ai souvent dit en français combien je vous respecte—combien je suis redevable à votre bonté, à vos conseils. Je voudrais le dire une fois en Anglais—Cela ne se peut pas—il ne faut pas y penser—la carrière des lettres m'est fermée.²⁴

[I would write a book and I would dedicate it to my literature master—to the only master that I have ever had—to you Monsieur. I have often told you in French how much I respect you—how much I am indebted to your kindness, to your advice, I would like to tell you for once in English—That cannot be—it must not be thought of—a literary career is closed to me.]

Just as the postscript of the later letter must be written in English to bear witness to her love of French, so the book that will be a record of her debt and gratitude must also be in English. And so, in some convoluted ways, her first novel, *The Professor* (1845–46), was the testimonial she here foresaw. This letter's French declaration sketches out her subsequent literary career, whose ambitions are rooted in the

wish to please her teacher. She is an English novelist whose inspiration—the motive that pulses through her inner voice—speaks French. Arthur Ransome quipped that *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890–91) was “the first French novel to be written in the English language.”²⁵ Brontë’s English novels, we might say, were written, at least in part—and perhaps in her heart—in French.

These are the affective dimensions of French for Brontë and, to an extent, for her culture. It is the language of love, especially illicit love, which nonetheless inculcates a terror of getting it wrong. It offers the fear of being lost, of losing oneself, abroad; of not having command of one’s words. And it induces the pleasure—sometimes even a masochistic pleasure—entailed by such fear. One way for Brontë the writer to confront those emotions, then, is to incorporate French as a problem in her fiction. While such a proposition risks more of a psychobiographical claim for motivation than literary critics are generally comfortable making, it is worth entertaining this idea as a way of bringing together the letters and the novel—not so as to say that the meaning of the novel is in the author’s psyche, but rather to see how the letters illuminate and are transformed by the novel’s language.²⁶ While French usage, for Brontë, has a demonstrable dimension of fantasy—as indeed a language does for anyone who is not thoroughly at home in it—the particular narrative effects of this emotional engagement are correspondingly in its relation to reality and to realism. French has an element of unreality or counter-reality for Brontë and so every time it appears it raises questions about the status of the real that are, ordinarily, held in suspension by the conventions of fiction and by the transparency of a native language. The alternation of languages itself evokes the question of what is real, what is imaginary, and how we as novel readers balance the forms of knowledge associated with each.

When Brontë’s narrators renege on promises to translate from spoken French into narrated English, they break an implied contract with the reader. Such breaks highlight the represented language, throwing into relief the relationship between the novel’s discourse and the invented world it posits as its signified. The novel’s improvisatory mixture of languages is particularly notable in its effects on dialogue, the narrative arena in which questions about reality and reliability are subject to special scrutiny, by virtue of quotation marks that seem to promise that everything contained within them accurately represents words as they were actually spoken. The movement between languages is coextensive with *Villette*’s other forms of narrative disruption, muddying ordinarily sharp distinctions between dialogue and

narration, and throwing grammatical personhood into question. Such disruptions, which might seem to interrupt narrative realism, in fact tend to heighten it by making vivid the experience of a loss of self, and a merging of speech and thought, that arises in the gaps between two languages.

It would be impossible to catalogue all the different means by which Brontë renders French in her English novel. Among them, as we have seen, are invoking French directly, in narration as well as dialogue; transliterating or offering hyper-literal translations in both directions; and employing accents to indicate that translation is underway. Almost any page of the novel after Lucy's arrival in Europe offers a chaotic mixture of such techniques. In this sentence, for example, Lucy describes M. Paul's attitude toward her: "Still gently railing at me as 'une forte femme—une Anglaise terrible—une petite casse-tout' [a strong-minded woman—a formidable Englishwoman—a little destroyer]—he declared that he dared not but obey one who had given such an instance of her dangerous prowess; it was absolutely like the 'grand Empereur, smashing the vase to inspire dismay'" (363). It is hard to say why the first words quoted within this passage should be in French, while the second are mostly in English. The text melds narration and dialogue, which helps to accommodate the shifts between languages. Foreign accents also mix the languages, which may explain why M. Paul should say "Empereur" rather than "Emperor" here, even when his speech is represented in English.

The chapter in which this passage appears, titled "The Watchguard," comes two-thirds of the way through the novel, when the romance of conflict between Lucy Snowe and M. Paul Emanuel is beginning to bristle and blossom. It is the place in which the play of language and form becomes most anarchic and inventive, and so it bears a closer examination of how language mixing coincides with challenges to the norms of realist fiction—norms such as distinctions between first and third person and between direct and indirect styles. Indirectly citing M. Paul's tirade against herself, Lucy states:

He said that, of all the women he knew, I was the one who could make herself the most consummately unpleasant: I was she with whom it was least possible to live on friendly terms. I had a "caractère intraitable" and perverse to a miracle. How I managed it, or what possessed me, he, for his part, did not know; but with whatever pacific and amicable intentions a person accosted me—crae! I turned concord to discord, good-will to enmity. He was sure, he—M. Paul—wished me well enough; he had never done me any harm that he knew of; he

might, at least, he supposed, claim a right to be regarded as a neutral acquaintance, guiltless of hostile sentiments: yet, how I behaved to him! With what pungent vivacities—what an impetus of mutiny—what a “fougue” of injustice! (368)²⁷

This passage starts in free indirect style (“He said that, of all the women he knew, I was the one”), which is unusual enough in first-person narration. The blending of voices typical of free indirect style is here weighted so much more toward character than narrator that the latter must reassert herself by inserting the speech tag “he—M. Paul,” as if we were in danger of forgetting who was speaking. Close as the narrative voice is to him, we know that he is speaking French and so, for the most part, his words are silently translated into English. The posited source shines forth at a few moments, as when the phrase “caractère intraitable” appears in the untranslated original, set between quotation marks. Why this one phrase, and “fougue” at the end? They may have an untranslatable punch or a residue of originality that authenticates the smooth translation of the remainder.

In Lucy’s incredulous response, reported directly as dialogue, the narrative intermingles the translation and the original: “Vivacities? Impetus? Fougue? I didn’t know. . . .” M. Paul responds in turn, now in French alternating with English (which the character could never speak so fluently) within a direct quotation: “Chut! à l’instant! There! there I went—vive comme la poudre! [Silence! this minute . . . as explosive as gunpowder]” (368). At the same time that this quotation mixes languages, it also, remarkably, turns grammatical personhood inside out, so that Lucy appears as “I” within M. Paul’s directly quoted speech. The passage then follows M. Paul in free indirect style (“He was sorry—he was very sorry: for my sake he grieved over the hapless peculiarity”), yet whenever it invokes the French words behind this English rendering, it places them in quotation marks—as if to say that they are the words as really spoken, whereas the grammatical indirection of the rest of the passage justifies its appearing in English: “This ‘emportement,’ this ‘chaleur’—generous, perhaps, but excessive—would yet, he feared, do me a mischief. It was a pity: I was not—he believed, in his soul—wholly without good qualities” (368). Were this in fact consistent, it would offer a plausible method for representing foreign speech. But *Villette* is very far from systematic.

The combination of languages and grammars continues until the narrator steps in abruptly and M. Paul’s voice is cut off at the end of the paragraph: “I might yet prove an useful, perhaps an exemplary,

character. But, as it was—And here, the little man's voice was for a minute choked" (368).²⁸ The effect of these simultaneous mixtures is comic: Lucy mocks M. Paul by quoting him through her own voice. But in so doing she also mocks herself by winking at her pose of superiority. She is having fun, not least at her own expense. Even more surprising is what ensues. Having tracked M. Paul in such a closely identified form of free indirect style, we now find his purportedly translated words, still reported indirectly, as well as their grammatical tag, themselves appearing between quotation marks:

"While he, M. Paul, was on these painful topics, he would dare my anger for the sake of my good, and would venture to refer to a change he had noticed in my dress. He was free to confess that when he first knew me . . . I satisfied him on this point." (369)

This passage deforms ordinary punctuation and so what seems to be direct quotation is rendered quasi-indirect. It is syntactically identical to the preceding passage of relatively conventional free indirection, but the effect of reading this passage in quotation marks (here and for the next few pages) is to mix the two characters' voices more vividly and strangely than is usual with free indirect style, which ordinarily puts the character's words into the narrator's voice. The shock of seeing those quotation marks is also slightly nostalgic in its citation of an eighteenth-century typographic practice much less systematic than nineteenth-century printing standards (and perhaps this is why Lucy breaks the frame at the outset of this section by alluding to what "novel-writers say" [368]).²⁹ There is also a qualitative shift from the free indirect passage to these paradoxically tagged passages within quotation marks, for the latter come even nearer to M. Paul's own utterances—though they are still not entirely his, since the person and tense (let alone the language) belong to Lucy. This shift marks a midway point between direct and indirect styles, a blending that suggests a scalar relation between modes often thought to be diacritically opposed.³⁰ In response to his quoted indirect speech, Lucy replies in direct style: "'Scarlet, Monsieur Paul? It was not scarlet! It was pink, and pale pink, too; and further subdued by black lace'" (369). Yet his speech continues in this odd form, whose indirection is again evident in the past tense and third person, with Lucy retaining the first person inside M. Paul's quoted discourse:

“Pink or scarlet, yellow or crimson, pea-green or sky-blue; it was all one: these were all flaunting, giddy colours; and as to the lace I talked of, *that* was but a ‘colifichet de plus’ [one more trinket].” And he sighed over my degeneracy. “He could not, he was sorry to say, be so particular on this theme as he could wish: not possessing the exact names of these ‘babioles,’ he might run into small verbal errors which would not fail to lay him open to my sarcasm.” (369)

In the context of this unstable punctuation, his comments about his inaccuracy of speech are peculiarly reflexive. So the exchange continues, even producing an oddity like this: “After sitting some minutes in silence . . . he inquired: ‘Whether what he had just said would have the effect of making me entirely detest him?’” (370). The question mark belongs to the quotation and to M. Paul as its subject, but the tense, person, and interrogative “whether” belong to Lucy as narrator.

The end of the chapter reveals that this has been a turning point in their relationship. After a section break, the narrator addresses herself in a quoted soliloquy that begins: “‘Well done, Lucy Snowe!’ cried I to myself” (370). Others, as she explains, condemn her for her “over-gravity in tastes and manner—want of colour in character and costume” (371). But along comes this “little man, differing diametrically from all these, roundly charging you with being too airy and cheery—too volatile and versatile—too flowery and coloury” (371). Rather than feeling aggrieved or misunderstood by such criticism, she feels grateful, recognized, and excited, precisely because he “calls [her] to account” for her petty vanities (371). That is to say that he notices her. She concludes this address to herself in the second person with these lines: “‘You are well habituated to be passed by as a shadow in Life’s sunshine: it is a new thing to see one testily lifting his hand to screen his eyes, because you tease him with an obtrusive ray’” (371).³¹ She has asserted herself and, to her masochistic gratification, won over M. Paul, in his gruff and rebuffing way. The play of grammatical persons, together with the play of languages and nationalities, registers the erotic friction between them, suggesting an affective shift. Brontë’s madcap treatment of persons, tenses, and grammars in the dialogue arises, I am suggesting, from the mixture of languages. The freewheeling combination of English and French loosens the grip of syntax and punctuation so as to make Brontë’s style not more French but less constrained—more itself, one might hazard to say. In learning what they cannot say in French, Brontë and her narrator forge new possibilities for English.

Shifts among languages in dialogue pose special problems for the status of representation. But such shifts extend beyond dialogue as well. The use of verbal accents supplies a further means by which to combine the foreign and the native, though it is much more characteristic of Dickens and Thackeray than of Brontë, for whom individual voices tend to be less distinctive. Still, she represents foreign accents and rhythms in *Villette*, as a component of characters' speech, as an element of narrative language, and as an explicit topic of novelistic interest. Late in the work, for example, M. Paul teases Lucy for her imperfect French:

"All these weary days," said he, repeating my words, with a gentle, kindly mimicry of my voice and foreign accent, not new from his lips, and of which the playful banter never wounded, not even when coupled as it often was, with the assertion, that however I might *write* his language, I *spoke* and always should speak it imperfectly and hesitatingly. (532)

It is easy to feel condescending toward someone who speaks a second language less than perfectly; it is common to feel ignorant, or to sound naïve, when speaking it oneself. The circuit between condescension and ignorance goes in both directions, as we witness when Lucy comments on M. Paul's use of English:

For his misfortune he had chosen a French translation of what he called "un drame de Williams Shackspeare; le faux dieu," he further announced, "de ces sots païens, les Anglais" [the false god . . . of these foolish heathens, the English]. . . . Of course, the translation being French, was very inefficient; nor did I make any particular effort to conceal the contempt which some of its forlorn lapses were calculated to excite. Not that it behoved or beseemed me to *say* anything; but one can occasionally *look* the opinion it is forbidden to embody in words. (366)

We have only to look to Dickens to see the xenophobic fun that is to be had with an accent at a foreigner's expense: the murderous, tiger-like rage of Mlle. Hortense in *Bleak House* (1852–53) demonstrates this approach amply, and the attitude itself is beautifully anatomized and pilloried in Mr. Podsnap's paternalistic bloviating at the foreign gentleman in *Our Mutual Friend* (1865). Brontë readily draws on these conventions both in M. Paul's mockery of Lucy's French accent and in her sneering attitude toward his attempts at English. The novel's depiction of accents clashes with the bilingual capacity it demands of its audience. "Be a capable, fluent reader of both languages," it seems

to say; “don’t be *too* good, or you risk the taint of foreignness; don’t be too poor, or you risk the charge of parochialism.”

Villette has an improvisatory attitude toward the division between languages, evident in the importation of French words as well as in the French-accented English. It is especially revealing, as I have suggested, when such topics form not just the texture of the novel’s discourse but its subject matter as well. When Lucy begs M. Paul’s pardon at one point, he responds:

“I will have no monsieur: speak the other word, or I shall not believe you sincere: another effort—*mon ami*, or else in English,—my friend!”

Now, “my friend” had rather another sound and significance than “*mon ami*,” it did not breathe the same sense of domestic and intimate affection: “*mon ami*” I could *not* say to M. Paul; “my friend,” I could, and did say without difficulty. This distinction existed not for him, however, and he was quite satisfied with the English phrase. (355)

Lucy’s unwillingness to call M. Paul “*mon ami*” has about it something of the adolescent taunt, “Is he your boyfriend?,” and its answer, “No—he’s a boy and he’s my friend, but he’s not my boyfriend.” (To which the unspoken response is generally: “Oh, yes he is.”) If the word in question were not in fact “*ami*,” one might cite this as a case of what the French call *faux amis* between brethren languages: false friends, where what appears to be a cognate term has in actuality a different meaning in the two languages—sometimes a risibly different one, whereby *faux amis* lead to *faux pas*.

The distinction between a friend and an *ami* is one that Lucy keeps to herself—or, at least, keeps as a private matter between herself and her reader. As one moves further away from words that are supposed to have been spoken out loud, the gap between languages—and the corollary one between represented contents and representational form—persists. In its use of indirect style, which is inherently closer to narration than dialogue, the novel also mixes languages. Consider this early scene between Mme. Beck and Lucy:

Presently, without preface or prelude, she said, almost in the tone of one making an accusation, “Meess, in England you were a governess.”

“No, madame,” said I smiling, “you are mistaken.” . . .

One morning, coming on me abruptly, and with the semblance of hurry, she said she found herself placed in a little dilemma. Mr. Wilson, the English master, had failed to come at *his hour*, she feared he was ill; the pupils were waiting *in classe*; there was no one to give a lesson; should I, *for once*, object to giving a short dictation exercise,

just that the pupils might not *have it to say* they had missed their English lesson? (84; emphasis added)

Rather than presenting Mme. Beck's initial question in French—in which language we know it must have been posed, since her English is rudimentary—the novel, with that “Meess,” renders the French as French-accented English. Then, as if having been seduced by this mode of representing French, Lucy gives over the narration to Mme. Beck in the following paragraph of free indirect style with an accent—that is, with traces of French in the syntax and diction. The orthographic indication of foreign accents occupies a middle-ground between the faithful representation of a language and its silent translation, providing an arena in which the two languages find a space to meet and mix. There are other kinds of mixture as well. M. Paul says, “I only know three phrases of English, and a few words: par exemple, de sonn, de mone, de stare—est ce bien dit? My opinion is that it would be better to give up the thing altogether: to have no English examination, eh?” (172). The translation of his French words into unmarked English transitions (via the Franglais “par exemple”) to a phonetic rendering in French of English words. It is a little like Luis d'Antin van Rooten's transliteration of English nursery rhymes into nonsensical French (“Un petit d'un petit” = Humpty Dumpty).³² Like Adèle Varens's “Aire,” M. Paul's “sonn” plays a role akin to that of dialect that is marked out phonetically in direct style. Unlike the importation of standard French, this representation of accented speech shifts the burden from the reader's knowledge of French and instead pokes fun at the character, seen now as the childlike blunderer in English.

The play between languages in *Villette* points to the way in which every novel (perhaps each moment in a novel) invents its own rules for the game of realism—by which I mean the relationship between its narrative language and its represented contents. Such rules vary widely depending on conventions of history, culture, and genre. *Villette* stages the problem of representing French in English (and vice versa) in a highly demonstrative way, which itself raises wider questions of how one knows, and in turn represents, reality in a fictive world. The very inconsistency in the novel's practice of aligning the language of its narrated materials with that of its narration enhances the effects of realism, even while seeming to defy them. It contributes to that realistic or mimetic illusion because the non-alignment between languages itself is a subset of the narrator's well-known alienation effects, which include disorientation, self-display combined with

self-abnegation, aggressive withholding, and coy revelation. These sensations are in turn projected onto and replicated by the reader in the play between the languages. The cultural associations of the French language intensify such readerly affects, which have been redirected from narrated events to the narrative experience. *Villette* relentlessly parries and challenges the idea of what counts as real, both within a character's mind and in the external world. In its flexible negotiation between the two languages, it gives literary form to that problematic itself. The novel dramatizes the question of how literature articulates its vexed relationship to reality, I have proposed, in part by putting that question in the shape of multiple competing languages vying for and trying the reader's apprehension.

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NOTES

¹ See Peter Brooks, *Henry James Goes to Paris* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2007); Daniel Karlin, "'Our precious quand même': French in the Letters of Henry James," *Cahiers victoriens et édouardiens* 78 (2013): <http://cve.revues.org/945>; and Karlin, *Proust's English* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2005).

² See Charlotte Brontë and Emily Brontë, *The Belgian Essays: A Critical Edition*, ed. Sue Lonoff (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1996).

³ See William J. Carlton, "Dickens Studies French," *Dickensian* 59 (1963): 21–27.

⁴ See Hélène Collins, "Le plurilinguisme dans *The Professor* de Charlotte Brontë: entre fascination et neutralisation de l'altérité," *Cahiers victoriens et édouardiens* 78 (2013): <http://cve.revues.org/818>.

⁵ C. Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (New York: Norton, 1971), 9.

⁶ Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 88–89.

⁷ C. Brontë, *Shirley* (London: Penguin, 2006), 7.

⁸ Brontë, *Shirley*, 61.

⁹ Brontë, *Shirley*, 61.

¹⁰ Brontë, *Shirley*, 63. As I note below, Brontë objected to including English translations of the French words and phrases in her novels. Nevertheless, most modern editions provide such glosses. I have accordingly supplied the translations from the cited editions where relevant. The Penguin edition translates these passages: "What an idea! . . . What a shameful deed! Anyone could see that the workers of this country are both stupid and evil. It's exactly like the English servants, especially the women; nothing but unbearable, like Sara for instance" (626–27n12); "but she is impertinent" (627n13).

¹¹ Charlotte Brontë to W. S. Williams, 17 September 1849, in *Letters of Charlotte Brontë*, 3 vol., ed. Margaret Smith (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995–2004), 2:255. The holograph manuscript of *Villette* (in the British Library) similarly shows that Brontë does not mark out French words (except occasionally to capitalize them), but both the first printed and subsequent editions italicize some of them, especially early in the novel. So, for instance, "chose," "maîtresses," "professeurs," "élèves," and "au diable" all appear in italics on a single page (C. Brontë, *Villette* [London: Penguin, 2004], 61; hereafter

cited parenthetically by page number). See also the first edition, Brontë, *Villette*, 3 vol. (London: Smith, Elder, 1853), 1:101.

¹²In many places “Miss” (sometimes “Miss Lucy”) is represented in French-accented voices as “Meess” or “Mees” or “Mees Lucie.” The first edition has “jeunes Miss” at this point (Brontë, *Villette* [1853], 1:97). The manuscript shows “Miss” with a long initial S.

¹³The Penguin edition translation reads: “Happily I know how to get my world moving” (556n24).

¹⁴See Meir Sternberg, “Polylingualism as Reality and Translation as Mimesis,” *Poetics Today* 2.4 (1981): 221–39.

¹⁵“A real British prude from what you say—a kind of monster, blunt and severe like an old grenadier corporal, and as crabbed as a nun” (564n11).

¹⁶Perhaps the narrator subscribes to the statement she makes parenthetically about Ginevra: “[S]he always had recourse to French, when about to say something specially heartless and perverse” (99–100).

¹⁷On Dickens’s adaptation of French syntax and word-for-word translations in some of the dialogue meant to have been uttered in French, see Nathalie Vanfasse, “Translating the French Revolution into English in *A Tale of Two Cities*,” *Cahiers victoriens et édouardiens* 78 (2013): <http://cve.revues.org/776>.

¹⁸Brontë to W. S. Williams, 23 March 1853, in *Letters*, 3:139.

¹⁹“New Novels,” *Fraser’s Magazine* 40 (1849): 693, quoted in Emily Eells, “The French *aire* in *Jane Eyre*,” *Cahiers victoriens et édouardiens* 78 (2013): <http://cve.revues.org/839>. Eells writes that “French has the value of a passport to freedom of speech in Brontë’s novels” and “France and the French language are built into [Jane’s] struggle for social emancipation as a woman,” but that “the language is also used to restrain and constrain emotions.”

²⁰Brontë to Ellen Nussey, 31 July 1845, in *Letters*, 1:412.

²¹“[I]l m’a fallu des efforts pénibles pour supporter jusqu’à present la privation que je me suis imposée” (Brontë to Constantin Heger, 18 November 1845, in *Letters*, 1:433).

²²Brontë to Constantin Heger, 18 November 1845, in *Letters*, 1:435.

²³Theodor W. Adorno, *Notes to Literature*, 2 vol., trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1991), 1:187.

²⁴Brontë to Constantin Heger, 24 July 1844, in *Letters*, 1:356.

²⁵Arthur Ransome, *Oscar Wilde: A Critical Study* (New York: Mitchell Kennerley, 1912), 95.

²⁶Patricia Yaeger argues that “[t]he second language serves an emancipatory function in Brontë’s texts” that “bring[s] a subversive multivoicedness into her text” (*Honey-Mad Women: Emancipatory Strategies in Women’s Writing* [New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1988], 36–37). She proposes that women take possession of language by “inventing a discourse that will put the hegemonic structure of the primary language entirely into question. The point is to make the dominant discourse into one among many possible modes of speech. By placing this discourse in contradiction the woman writer begins to rescript her available language games, to locate multivocality as one site of transformation for women’s own writing and productivity” (41).

²⁷“Caractère intraitable” (with a reversed accent mark) appears in both the Penguin (368) and the first edition (Brontë, *Villette* [1853], 3:18).

²⁸The first edition has a double em-dash (“—”) between “was” and “And” (Brontë, *Villette* [1853], 3:20).

²⁹I am grateful to Connie Zhu for consultation on these points and for showing me her unpublished article, “The Pre-History of Free Indirect Discourse” (2014). See

also Jonathan Rée, “Funny Voices: Stories, Punctuation, and Personal Identity,” *New Literary History* 21 (1990): 1039–58.

³⁰ On varieties of direction and indirection, see Sternberg, “Point of View and the Indirections of Direct Speech,” *Language and Style* 15 (1982): 67–117; and Monika Fludernik, *The Fictions of Language and the Languages of Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1993).

³¹ The close-quotation mark at the end of the soliloquy is missing from the first edition (Brontë, *Villette* [1853], 3:24), as it is from the Penguin (371). The Penguin adopts the modern British practice of using single quotation marks as the first level, whereas the first edition uses double quotation marks, as was usual in the nineteenth century (and is standard U.S. practice today). Comparison of these editions to Brontë’s manuscript reveals that the compositors largely followed the author’s idiosyncratic use of quotation marks (including the missing close-quotation mark at the end of the “Watchguard” chapter), although other punctuation was frequently emended, as were spelling errors. See Brontë, *Villette*, ed. Herbert Rosengarten and Margaret Smith (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984), xxxviii, xlix. In a letter to her publisher, Brontë expresses appreciation for the printer’s corrections to *Jane Eyre*: “I have to thank you for punctuating the sheets before sending them to me as I found the task very puzzling—and besides I consider your mode of punctuation a great deal mo[re] correct and rational than my own” (Brontë to Messrs Smith, Elder and Co., 24 September 1847, in *Letters*, 1:542). I am grateful to Tita Chico for assistance with examining the manuscript.

³² “Un petit d’un petit / S’étonne aux Halles / Un petit d’un petit / Ah! degrés te fallent / Indolent qui ne sort cesse / Indolent qui ne se mène / Qu’importe un petit d’un petit / Tout Gai de Reguennes” (Luis d’Antin van Rooten, *Mots D’Heures: Gousses, Rames: The D’Antin Manuscript* [New York: Viking, 1967], 1).