CHAPTER II

CHARLOTTE AND EMILY BRONTÉ

Charlotte and Emily Brontë continue the romantic tradition of nature in their writings. Living in an age that was facing a crisis of faith and in which doubt became an essential ingredient of spiritual experience, they accepted the existence of a divine principle in life as an unquestioned reality. Spiritual experience was, for them, a matter of instinctive response. They felt the spirituality of life as self-evident, and their response to nature was deeply intermingled with the passionate inner urge to experience life 'religiously'.

Their attitude to nature is essentially romantic, and they see it mainly in terms of the inner world of feelings and emotions. Their family life of repression and routine and of early responsibility turned them to look inward for freedom from these constraints. They were fascinated by the elemental forces of nature as representing the world of liberty. But having been brought up to an orthodox view of morality and religion, they found it hard to reconcile their sense of individual freedom and liberty with the vision of the conventional world. In their different ways, they felt a tension between the two worlds, the inner and the outer, and turned to nature to define
their consciousness of duality in life.

Their vision of life is essentially romantic in that it is a subjective vision. But it also represents a Victorian tendency as it expresses the revolt against the conventional religious and social values. The element of duality in their vision of life adds a new dimension to the romantic attitude towards nature. They place the subjective experience by the side of the objective world and thus relate the individual to two orders - the inner and the outer, the personal and the social. The more common tradition of the romantic attitude to nature in fiction, as in poetry, indicated the possibility of a harmonious vision of life by discovering a harmony between man and nature. The individual is identified with nature and does not experience much tension when he has to make a choice between nature and society. But, in Charlotte and Emily Bronte, the individual becomes a centre of conflict between the conventional and the natural, the personal and the social, the spiritual and the habitual, the inner and the outer claims. Their writings are an articulation of this conflict, as they felt it in their different ways, which to a great extent defines their response to nature.

I. CHARLOTTE BRONTE

There is an ambivalence in Charlotte Bronte's attitude
to nature, which may be explained in terms of her response to the inner life of feelings and emotions. The inner life of the individual is felt to be the expression of a spiritual principle, and when it is identified with the objective world, nature is seen as a moral and divine order. But when the conventional social order is presumed to be moral, the inner life is felt to be immoral and passion becomes a form of devilish temptation, and the natural order, exemplified by the world of the senses, appears immoral and ungodly. Thus the moral and divine order of nature is not taken for granted nor is the social order entirely rejected.

In order to see Charlotte's attitude to nature in its proper perspective, it is necessary to realise that there are two vital strands in her thoughts and experiences.¹ The influence of the Romantics of the previous generation² is mixed with the ideas of conventional values, and Romantic

² cf., Charlotte, like the other children of the Brontë family, derived "more inspiration from the fiction of the previous generation, of which the contemporary taste disapproved" (ibid., p. 83); but she was also educated to live "a life of repression which gradually spread its chilling influence [though] the fire burned all the stronger underneath" (L. Dooley, "A Psychoanalysis of Charlotte Brontë, as a Type of the Woman of Genius," The American Journal of Psychology, XXI (1920), 229-30).
and Victorian elements are simultaneously available in her ideas. Repression and freedom are dominant motifs of the various themes of her novels, whether relating to society, religion, art, morality or nature. That she was conscious of the conflicting claims of freedom and conformity, self and society is sufficiently clear from some of her letters. In reply to Southey's letter, in which he had written to her that literature could not be the business of a woman's life, she wrote:

I have endeavoured not only attentively to observe all the duties a woman ought to fulfil, but to feel deeply interested in them. I don't always succeed, for sometimes when I am teaching or sewing I would rather be reading or writing; but I try to deny myself... It shows that writing was an avenue of expression of her repressed feelings, and also that she wished to observe her womanly duties. The consciousness of a similar tension between the 'real' and the imaginative worlds is apparent from her letters to G.H. Lewes. These letters reveal that

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5 ibid., p. 251. 6 Dooley, op. cit., p. 251.
7 Spark, op. cit., pp. 139, 142.
she was seized by inspiring visions and tried to check them but could not always do so. Her letters to M. Héger reveal a tension between love and duty (in the sense of conscience) in her soul. The scene in which Jane Eyre has to make a choice between her passion for Rochester and her duty to society is reminiscent of a similar experience through which Charlotte had herself passed. This conflict is at the source of the ambivalence in her religious and social ideas.

Sometimes she seems to believe in the Calvinistic concept of Hell, and other times shows that she had no faith in future life. Her belief in salvation through suffering was sometimes contradicted by the sense of predestination. It also resulted in her belief that suffering does not bring salvation and that "some were appointed beforehand to sorrow and much disappointment."

Charlotte's faith in sincerity and love is expressed

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8 Dooley, op.cit., p.250.
10 Dooley, op.cit., p.244; Winnifrith, op.cit., p.50.
11 ibid., p.45.
in her revolt against the conventional view of marriage, which placed greater emphasis on form. In reply to the adverse criticism of Jane Eyre on grounds of immorality, she had observed that convention and morality were not the same thing. It seems that she put all her faith in the inner life of the soul:

The human heart has hidden treasures,
In secret kept, in silence sealed! — 15

But this faith is contradicted by the fact that she did not accept the morality of love outside wedlock. She appears to believe in two contradictory value systems — one based on the need of fulfilment of the personal desires of the individual and the other on his duty of conformity to the social conventions.

The ambiguity in the social and religious ideas of Charlotte continues in the ideas and treatment of nature in her novels. By the side of the Rousseauistic view of nature we find completely different views, e.g., the orthodox Christian view of 'depraved nature,' the

14 Jane Eyre, Preface to the Second Edition, p.13; cf., Charlotte's praise of Thackeray for his power "to restore the warped system of things" reflects her rebellion against the social system of the age (ibid., p.14).

15 Presentiment in The Professor and Poems (World's Classics, 1912), p.303.
anti-romantic view of cruel and inhuman nature, and the contemporary socioc-religious view of immoral nature as represented by passion and fleshly desires.

Charlotte's first novel, *The Professor*, is not of much significance for the purpose of the present study. It was an attempt to write a novel of a different kind from her childhood 'Angrian' juvenalis. Her aim of achieving the realistic to the exclusion of the poetical is evident from the 'Author's Preface'. The romantic aspect of her vision of the creative world of imagination is deliberately suppressed in this novel.

Nevertheless, *The Professor* is illuminating because here we get some glimpses of the themes which were to recur in her later novels. The autobiographical element which, in one form or the other, is present in her novels, is to be found here as well. Further, we discover the emphasis on the value of feeling in this novel. When Frances is told by Hunaden, "you cannot reason at all... there is no logic in you," she retorts, "Better to be

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17 ibid., Introduction by Margaret Lane, p.x.
Charlotte's rejection of slavish conformity to convention derived from her faith in the value of sincerity.

In *The Professor* Frances Henri's view of marriage is based upon the belief in the natural equality of the sexes and in the value of love in human life. The laws and conventions of society are condemned as immoral when they violate this equality. Frances tells Crimsworth:

> If a wife's nature loathes that of a man she is wedded to, marriage must be slavery. Against slavery all right thinkers revolt... . Death would certainly screen me from bad laws and their consequences.

Another noticeable element in this novel is the Rousseauistic contrast between nature and industrialism to the disadvantage of the latter. The love of Frances and Crimsworth finds fruition at Daisy Lane. The description of nature uncontaminated by the ugliness of the industrial atmosphere places the relationship of the lovers in a definite perspective. We see their love as pure and sincere and protected by nature from the corrupting influence of the

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19 *Wise and Symington*, op.cit., I,220.

20 *The Professor*, Ch.XXV, p.220.
industrial civilisation and its hypocrisy:

That home lies amid a sequestered and rather a hilly region...a region whose verdure the smoke of mills has not yet sullied, whose waters still run pure, whose swells of moorland preserve in some ferny glens that lie between the very primal wildness of nature, her mass, her bracken, her blue-bells, her scents of reed and heather, her free and fresh breezes.21

But The Professor also anticipates Charlotte's ambiguous treatment of nature in her later novels. The garden in this novel22 is associated with love and also with treachery and disillusionment.23 Crimsworth's first romantic visions of love are born in the garden when he is walking with Mlle Reuter, and it is in this garden that he discovers M. Pellet disclosing his love to her. It makes Crimsworth aware of her treachery and causes disillusionment about his romantic vision.

In Jane Eyre nature is more intimately related to the social and religious ideas than in The Professor. The ambiguity in her attitude towards religion is also reflected in her attitude to nature, and no clear picture of a philosophy of nature emerges out of it. It appears that at times Charlotte founds her values on nature and rejects the social and religious standards of judgement. But at

21 ibid., p.228. 22 ibid., Ch.XII, pp.91-4.
other times she seems to accept the latter and reject the former. Her attempts to reconcile nature with society and religion blur the vision of the contrast in which nature and society are more feelingly and forcefully presented.

Most of the generalisations about the theme and nature of *Jane Eyre* do not stand the test of a scrutiny in the light of various conflicting statements and scenes in the novel. Kathleen Tillotson refers to *Jane Eyre* "as a novel of the inner life, not of man in his social relations; it maps a private world."\(^24\) This observation is only partially true, for it does not take into account the social and religious context in which the inner life is continually presented. The values of the inner life are regularly subjected to the scrutinising eyes of religious and social ideas. As Kathleen Tillotson rightly observes, "Jane's progress is one of spiritual growth as well as emotional adventure."\(^25\) But this progress is invariably related to questions of social living and its value is examined on the touchstone of reason, duty, religion, society, human love and conscience. *Jane Eyre* "goes to nature in order to

\(^{24}\text{Kathleen Tillotson, Novels of the Eighteen-Forties (London,1962), p.261.}\)

\(^{25}\text{ibid., p.309.}\)
discover and define, but her discoveries lead back inevitably to the problems of social living."\textsuperscript{26}

Nature, representing the world of peace and solitude, is an important theme in Victorian literature, and the demand to return to nature is an expression of the desire to escape from the moral constrictions of the present. Escapism is an important motif in Victorian novel, and the extension of the range in the contemporary novel to the social, the geographical, and the remote past is an expression of this tendency.\textsuperscript{27} It finds a significant place in Charlotte's novels in the form of Rousseauistic return to nature for its wild scenery and solitude, widely treated in the sentimental novels of the eighteenth century. Very often her characters seek peace and happiness in the company of nature when they are oppressed by mental gloom and frustration resulting from their social condition and treatment. Jane Eyre, for example, is denied human sympathy by Mrs. Reed and discovers in Bewick's 'History of English Birds' a mysterious fairy-world and feels happy.\textsuperscript{28} Tormented by her aunt, Jane expresses her love to an inanimate doll. As she says, "Human beings must love something, and in the dearth of worthier objects of affection, I contrived to find

\textsuperscript{26}Jennifer Gribble, "Jane Eyre's Imagination," Nineteenth-Century Fiction, XXIII(December,1960), 290.

\textsuperscript{27}Tillotson, op.cit., p.93. \textsuperscript{28}Jane Eyre, Ch.I, p.21.
pleasure in loving and cherishing a faded graven image... "29

Oppression and misery at Lowood intensify Jane's desire for happiness and liberty. The rules and systems of Lowood are imprisoning, and she feels that the world of nature is the world of sensations, excitements and liberty. She expresses her longing to escape the crippling repressions of Lowood:

My eye passed all other objects to rest on those most remote, the blue peaks; it was those I longed to surmount; all within their boundary of rock and heath seemed prison ground, exile limits.30

When she is troubled by the child vision in her dream, "it was not without a certain wild pleasure I ran before the wind delivering my trouble of mind to the measureless air-torrent thundering through space."31 Again, nature offers her escape from the turmoils of passion and conscience.

Fleeing Thornfield she realise[s] that there is no other place she can go to but 'Mother Nature' and decides to "seek her breast and ask repose."32

In Shirley nature is identified with the world of imagination, in which the individual discovers a substitute for the happiness that is denied in human society. A poet,

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29 ibid., Ch.II, p.41. 30 ibid., Ch.X, p.98.
31 ibid., Ch. XXIV, p.292. 32 ibid., Ch.XXVIII, p.340.
who is gifted with imagination, can create his own bliss and derive happiness in the company of nature. He can escape the crushing weight of "the world and circumstances [that] often turn a cold and dark side to him." He can have "his own society with his great friend and goddess, Nature, quite independent of those who find little pleasure in him, and in whom he finds no pleasure at all." To Caroline and Shirley nature is the world of peace and harmony. They go to the Nunnely Dale to spend a whole day "surrounded by olden silence, and above all by quietude." In the midst of the natural surroundings, where "the sea-birds live and breathe unmolested," Caroline is able to forget the inexpressible weight she has on her mind. Human society is annoying to Mrs. Pryor and she seeks freedom from its disturbances in the company of nature. Similarly, Lucy Snows in Villette often finds escape from society in the midst of natural scenery. The objects of nature offer her happiness 'born of solitude'. Nature has

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33 Shirley (Edinburgh,1905), Vol.I, Ch.IV, p.65.
35 Shirley, Vol.I, Ch.XII, pp.300-3.
36 ibid., Ch.XIII, pp.349-50.
37 ibid., Vol.II, Ch.XXI, p.80.
strong and exciting attractions for her and she cannot resist the "delight of staying with the wild hour, black and full of thunder, pealing out such an ode as language never delivered to man... ."  

Besides this escapist treatment, nature is also presented as a contrast to human society and its rigid, conventional religiosity. Nature is associated with freedom, goodness and nobility, and society with slavery, evil and artificiality. This contrast is Rousseauistic in its preference of nature to society and also Victorian because it implies a criticism of the Victorian society and its values. It represents the revolt against social conventions, artificial life and religious hypocrisy. For example, the objects of nature are more human to Jane Eyre than the inhuman humanity. The misery and niggardliness of Lowood are in contrast with the plenty of nature. Jane enjoys this plenty with an unfettered liberty and pleasure. While disease, gloom and fear are the inhabitants of Lowood,
"bright May shone unclouded over the bold hills and beautiful woodlands out of doors." Disease and death are the result of unhealthy system and restrictions of the school. The contrast therefore points out the healthfulness of nature and sickliness of the unnatural restrictions and repressions practised in society.

The artificial social distinction between man and woman is seen as an expression of the cruelty and insensitiveness of society. Jane claims that "women feel just as men feel... They suffer from too rigid a constraint, too absolute a stagnation precisely as men would suffer..." The passion, sufferings and love of Jane are presented to show that a woman is capable of deep feelings, sincerity, love and nobility as much as any man is. To think that the woman's sphere of activity is limited to her domestic life is narrow-mindedness which results from the artificial conventions of the society. The natural nobility of character is preferred to the nobility of manners. Charlotte's attack on the artificial manners of society is seen in the portrayal of the aristocratic party at Thornfield. Blanche Ingram's callousness to Jane shows the shallowness of her character. Miss Ingram's attitude to Jane is associated

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41 Jane Eyre, Ch. IX, p. 90. 42 ibid., Ch. XII, p. 124.
43 ibid., Ch. XVII, p. 192.
with the artificial distinction between the rich and the poor. The conventions of society are held responsible for stifling the spontaneity and vigour of the soul:

Miss Ingram was very showy, but she was not genuine; she had a fine person, and many attainments; but her mind was poor, her heart barren by nature: nothing bloomed spontaneously on that soil; no unforced natural fruits delighted by its freshness.  

Her heart has lost its vitality in the rigid, hard and barren wasteland of social conventions. The want of natural feelings in her soul is also a result of the ideas and principles instilled in her from early childhood.  

Again, it is the artificiality of high society that makes ladies Lynn and Ingram look "like a pair of magnified puppets." In contrast with the character of the aristocratic ladies is the nobility of Jane's character. She is informal, and her sincerity and frankness are appreciated by Rochester. Her natural vitality is the main attraction for him. He feels the difference between her naturalness and the artificiality of Miss Ingram. He tells Jane, "...if you are cast in a different mould to the majority, it is no merit of yours: Nature did it." 

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44 ibid., Ch.XVIII, p.200.  
45 cf., Wordsworth's Lines Written in Early Spring.  
46 Jane Eyre, Ch.XVIII, p.203.  
47 ibid., Ch.XIV, p.149.
If social conventions are responsible for artificiality in human relations, the rigid and conventional laws of society are responsible for turning a man, who is good by nature, into evil ways. As Jane remarks about Rochester, 'nature' meant him to be a good man; but the laws of marriage and the conventions of society create circumstances that force him to take to evil ways.\(^4^8\)

Like social conventions, rigidity in religious outlook is held responsible for unhealthy repression of natural affections. St. John's Calvinistic zeal has hardened his heart and turned him blind to natural feelings. He is "a cold hard man"\(^4^9\) and his denial of nature causes him to speak like an automaton.\(^5^0\) One of the reasons for the lack of intimacy between him and Jane is that the objects of nature are pure and sweet source of pleasure to Jane, but to St. John "Nature was not...that treasury of delight it was to his sisters."\(^5^1\) When he makes the proposal of marriage to Jane, his indifference to her sentiments appears almost cruel. Thus in his character religious fanaticism is made to appear as unnatural and inhuman. Again, in the character of Brocklehurst the religious hypocrisy of the age is exposed. His religious profession

\(^{4^8}\)ibid., pp.150-1. \(^{4^9}\)ibid., Ch.XXXII, p.393.  
\(^{5^0}\)ibid., Ch.XXXI, p.383. \(^{5^1}\)ibid., Ch.XX, p.359.
appears ridiculous in the light of the cruel and inhuman treatment of the girls at Lowood. His use of the idea of Grace to justify the repression of the girls reveals the inhuman aspect of his religiosity. Similarly, the curates in Shirley appear ridiculous in their lack of natural affections. Mr. Yorke's religiosity leads to the loss of the essential religious sentiments of the soul:

He believed in God and heaven; but his God and heaven were those of a man in whom awe, imagination and tenderness lack.

Religion is also held responsible for stifling natural feelings and for dividing one human being from another, thus determining human relations on sectarian grounds. It becomes an obstacle to the fruition of human sympathies. For example, Helstone forbids Caroline from seeing Robert Moore, whom she loves, simply because he is a Jacobin.

From the above discussion it may be evident that Charlotte set high value on nature. In reply to her father's question as to the next best book to the Bible, she said, "The Book of Nature." Nature and truth, she claimed, were her guides. In her letters she frequently referred

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52 ibid., Ch.VII. 53 Shirley, Vol.I, Ch.I. 54 ibid., Ch.IV, p.53 55 ibid., Ch.XIII, p.357. 56 Gaskell, op.cit., p.49. 57 ibid., p.238.
to the beauties of nature, and in her correspondence with G.H. Lewes she referred to her awareness of the power of imagination. Again, she appealed to nature in recommending the poems of the Bells (the assumed title of the Brontë sisters, i.e., Charlotte, Emily and Anne) to the readers. But it is not clear as to what she meant by nature and imagination. The ambiguity in her ideas of nature and their contradictory presentation in the novels do not throw any clear light on her conception of nature. She presents nature as a source of escape from repression and unhappiness and uses it as a standard of criticism of society and religion.

But Charlotte also shows the contrary awareness that nature is not all tenderness, beauty and delight. It is seen as cruel and unsympathetic to human needs. Similarly, the moral value of passion is questioned and that of duty and conscience upheld. Nature, at times, fails to provide consolation to a heart craving for human sympathy. Suffering from the sense of isolation, Jane seeks shelter in a part of the plantation which is quite sequestered, but she finds "no pleasure in the silent trees, the falling fir-cones, 

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50 ibid., p.133.
51 vide above pp.60-8. 52 vide above pp.69 ff.
the congealed relics of autumn, russet leaves, swept by past winds, and now stiffened together. The cruelty of man is matched by the cruelty of the elements of nature. After the Sunday service at the Lowood church the girls are returning to the school. Their clothing "was insufficient to protect us from the severe cold." They have to return "by an exposed and hilly road where the bitter winter wind, blowing over a range of snowy summits to the north, almost flayed the skin from our faces." But this inhospitable appearance of nature is contradicted by its benign and hospitable aspects. When Jane is fleeing from Rochester and Thornfield, she feels the warmth of the summer day, looks at the sky and finds it pure with a kindly star twinkling:

Nature seemed to me benign and good; I thought she loved me, outcast as I was; and I who from man could anticipate only mistrust, rejection, insult, clung to her with filial fondness... Jane makes, almost like a follower of the school of Shaftesbury, "a God out of Nature - a God immanent in the world".

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63 Jane Eyre, Ch.IV, p.51. 64ibid., Ch.VII, pp.72,73. 65ibid., Ch.XXVIII, p.340. Jane's longing for nature is almost Byronic in its expression of passionateness and in its sense of isolation and desertion by humanity. cf., Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Canto III, sts. xiii-xiv.

She thinks of creation as the revelation of God and the objects of nature bespeak the presence of Divinity, which inspires spiritual visions in her heart:

we know that God is everywhere; but certainly we feel His presence most when His works are on the grandest scale spread before us.⁶⁷

But this vision turns out to be a romantic dream in the face of reality, and Jane Eyre's feeling of consolation in nature does not last long.⁶⁸ If nature can give her protection and appease her hunger with ripe fruits and make her wish for a permanent shelter in the sunshine, she is not all-sufficing nature and cannot supply all the needs of human beings. Jane is a human being and has a human being's wants. She is "gnawed by nature's cravings" and finds that "solitude would be no solitude — rest no rest — while the vulture, hunger, thus sunk beak and talons in my side."⁶⁹

Tortured by hunger, Jane now ceases to notice the changes and variety of the romantic hills.⁷⁰ She moves towards a hamlet; finds human life and human labour near, and struggles on to strive to live and bend to toil like the rest.

We were told in Jane Eyre about the natural equality

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⁶⁷ Jane Eyre, Ch.XVIII, p.341.
⁶⁹ Jane Eyre, Ch.XVIII, p.344. ⁷⁰ ibid., p.342.
of the sexes. But this view is contradicted in Shirley when it is suggested that the expression of love is the natural prerogative of man. Here Charlotte appears to be subscribing to the contemporary social ideal of modesty in woman. A woman is meant by nature to keep her passions secret because if she expresses her love, "the result would be shame and anguish, inward remorse for self-treachery. Nature would brand such demonstrations as a rebellion against her instincts, would vindictively repay it afterwards by the thunderbolt of self-contempt striking suddenly in secret." A woman should therefore accept this restriction imposed on her by 'Nature' without remonstrance. A woman, who learns this lesson of nature, will be stronger and wiser. Thus nature becomes an accomplice in the act of self-repression:

Nature is an excellent friend in such case; sealing the lips, interdicting utterance, commending a placid dissimulation.

Here Charlotte uses nature either without discrimination or confuses it with social sanction which is so often criticised and denounced by her. A similar ambiguous reference to nature is found when Robert Moore tells Caroline, "...I find in myself, Lina, two natures; one for the world and business and one for home and leisure."

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71 vide above p.90. 72 Shirley, Vol.I, Ch.VII, p.149. 73 ibid. 74 ibid., Ch.XIV, p.365.
Read in its context, it will be clear that the two natures here refer to the desire for wealth and love respectively. Robert Moore confuses an acquired desire for wealth with the natural desire for love.

Early in *Shirley* nature is associated with imagination in creating visions of happiness. But in contrast to this poetic vision nature is also a source of destruction of the imaginative world. It is associated with the objective reality and is opposed to the inner world of imagination. Caroline is, in her vision, listening to and communicating with "her small untamed and unknown protege," but "as dawn approached, the setting stars and breaking day dimmed the creation of Fancy; the vacant song of birds hushed her whispers." At another place imagination creates a false picture of reality to Robert Moore. It is again associated with unreality when Shirley aspires to "borrow of imagination what reality will not give me." Similarly, there are

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75 vide above pp.87-8.
76 cf., "All the ambiguity of Charlotte's feelings is concentrated in the word 'imagination'; it means to her, in one mood, a snare and a delusion; and in another mood she... [craves] it as a road to safety." R.B. Heilman, "Charlotte Brontë, Reason and the Moon," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, XIV (March, 1960), 257.
79 *ibid.*, Ch.XVII, p.433.
various pictures of the romantic aspects of nature side by side with the non-Rousseauistic ones. In Villette there are instances when nature's beauty, calm and tenderness are praised; but the City is also said to have its own charm.

This conflicting response to nature is a reflection of the tension in Charlotte's soul. In recoiling from the world of romance and sensibility in The Professor she had cut herself off from a strong source of her creative inspiration. Writing in 1856 (The Professor was written in 1846), she confessed that "a passionate preference for the wild, wonderful, and thrilling - the strange, startling, and harrowing - agitates diverse souls that show a calm and sober surface." It suggests that she was not completely reconciled to the assumed realism of her first novel. She was disturbed by her visions even while showing a calm and placid surface. The conflicting claims of reason and emotion, religion and nature, duty and passion, intellect and heart, reality and

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81 Villette, Vol.I, Ch.VI, p.74; Ch.XII, pp.172,178.

82 The Professor, Author's Preface, p.xii.

83 vide above p.82.
imagination, conscience and feeling, society and self run across her later writings. The recoil from, or the acceptance of one or the other claim is so irregular and inconsistent that it is difficult to find a satisfactory answer as to what value is given to one or the other. Sometimes religion is preferred to nature, duty to love, conscience to feeling, reason to emotion, and at other times it is just the opposite. It is also found that in some instances the opposites become synonyms.

Charlotte was intensely disturbed by the consciousness of a duality in her own nature — the passionate and the religious, the pagan and the Christian, the pleasure-seeking and the self-denying, the rebellious and the dutiful. There is a tendency in her work to find a solution to the dilemma, but it remains more an articulation of a problem than a resolution, for the conflicts end more in a juxtaposition than in a fusion. It is nearer the truth to say that her writings are a statement of the problem than an answer to it. She appears to have been living in two worlds both of which had an equal claim on her. There is no attempt to relate the two to a common value system. The value of the romantic elements is judged by the standard of personal freedom and happiness while that of the conventional elements is judged by social and religious standards. This dual value system, the socio-religious and the personal, has
contributed to the ambiguity in her vision of the relation between nature and religion and also in her vision of the individual's relation to both nature and religion.

In *Jane Eyre* Brocklehurst tells Miss Temple of his plan to bring up the girls at Lowood so as "not to accustom them to habits of luxury and indulgence, but to render them hardy, patient and self-denying." He insists that "we are not to conform to nature: I wish these girls to be the children of grace." There is no doubt that it is Brocklehurst's hypocrisy that is satirized here because his religious profession is at odds with his practice. But there is no suggestion that his orthodox Christian idea of the two orders of grace and nature is rejected. But inasmuch as this idea is used by him as a pretext for the inhuman and cruel treatment of the children, its practice is certainly condemned. Therefore, it is not clear as to what importance is to be given to the idea of the supremacy of grace over nature, for its practice is made to appear suspect without the idea itself being rejected.

It appears that Charlotte was inclined to believe in the Christian ideal of the supremacy of grace over nature. But when it came to its application in the life of an individual, she rather adopted a completely opposite position,

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4 *Jane Eyre*, Ch. VII, p. 73. 5 ibid.
a position in which the fulfilment of the life in nature is equated with the fulfilment of the will of God. In a scene between St. John and Jane Eyre, Jane rejects St. John's plea for the subordination of human love to the divine without rejecting the idea of the supremacy of divine love. In this scene she implicitly accepts the truth of St. John's idea; but her actions leave a clear impression that human love is not to be discarded for the divine. St. John proposes to her to be his wife and help him in his missionary work. He requires her to give up the human love in a religious cause. But she rejects him because "he will never love me." The persuasion of St. John is presented as having an imprisoning effect on her: "My iron shroud contracted round me; persuasion advanced with slow sure step." She has struggled to retain her life for the human love of Rochester and, therefore, scorns St. John's idea of love. Human affections and sympathies are very powerful in her. She gives great importance to the life in this world and holds that "God did not give my life to throw away." In contrast to this, early in the novel, Jane seems to have accepted Helen Burns' idea of the insignificance of human love and this world and

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86 ibid., Ch.XXXIV. 87 ibid., p.423. 88 ibid., p.422.
89 ibid., Ch.XXVIII, p.347; Ch.XXXIV, p.427.
90 ibid., Ch.xxx, p.374. 91 ibid., Ch.XXXV,p.433.
of the supremacy of the life in the other world. Helen Burns' and St. John's ideas are essentially the same. But Jane Eyre's reactions to them are contradictory and inconsistent. She rejects St. John's idea of human love and marriage but not his ideal of the life in divinity. She is ready to accompany him on the missionary adventure as his sister but not as his wife, for she would not compromise her earthly love for the divine. She is prepared to embrace a life of self-abnegation in a divine cause; but she would not agree to the sacrifice of the emotions related to the flesh. She recognises the virtuou3ness of St. John's life of heroic renunciation, but herself clings to the earthly life to seek fulfilment here and now. She is apparently unaware of the contradiction in her attitudes.

Like Jane Eyre, Caroline in Shirley muses on the virtues of self-denial, but when she thinks of its application to herself, she finds that virtue does not lie in self-denial:

Undue humility makes tyranny; weak concession creates selfishness. The Romish religion especially teaches renunciation of self, submission to others, and nowhere are to be found so many grasping tyrants as in the ranks of the Romish priesthood.

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92 ibid., Ch.VIII, pp.82-3. 93 Shirley, Vol.I, Ch.X, p.252. 94 ibid., p.253.
Like the ambiguity in Charlotte's vision of the individual's relation to nature and religion, her vision of nature's relation to the inner world of emotion and feeling is conflicting. Sometimes nature is identified with the inner world and sometimes opposed to it. When Jane Eyre comes to know of the existence of Rochester's wife and refuses to marry him, he pleads with her in the name of the purity and divinity of passion. A conflict between passion and duty rages in Jane's soul. She does not feel that there is anything evil in her passion for Rochester. But her conscience tells that the fulfilment of her natural desire would be a violation of her duty to society. The laws of society and nature both appear to her as moral and divine and also as opposed to one another. Rochester tells her that in accepting him she would be transgressing a mere human law. She feels the truth of his pleadings. Her conscience, reason and feeling all prompt her to submit to him;

This was true: and while he spoke my very conscience and reason turned traitors against me, and charged me with crime in resisting him. They spoke as loud as Feellingi, and that clamoured wildly. 'Oh, Comply!' it said.  

Here it is clear that the laws of the inner life are

95 Jane Eyre, ChXXVII, p.334.  96 ibid.
sanctioned by conscience, reason and feeling which impel her to comply with the passionate inner urge. But the next moment we find Jane confusing self-respect with conformity to convention. The resistance to Rochester becomes in fact an acceptance of the notion of conventional morality:\(^\text{97}\)

\[\text{I will keep the law given by God; sanctioned by man.}\]
\[\text{I will hold to the principles received by me when I was sane and not mad - as I am now.}^{98}\]

It is practically an affirmation of the faith in the law of marriage as a divine sanction. It is also a rejection of passion as immoral. Allen's observation that "Charlotte Brontë is concerned with truth to her own feelings; the value of feelings she never questions, it is taken for granted because they are her own,"\(^99\) is not tenable. Jane's dream of the following night confirms that her feelings are evil. It is a temptation from which she must flee. Through the agency of nature Jane has the vision of "a white form that shone in the azure, inclining a glorious brow earthward.\(^\text{100}\)

Nature concurs with the dictates of duty in enabling Jane

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\(^{97}\text{cf., "Conventionality is not morality." ibid., p.13.}\)

\(^{98}\text{ibid., Ch.XXVII, p.334.}\)


\(^{100}\text{Jane Eyre, Ch.XXVII, p.336.}\)
to take the decision of running away from Rochester and Thornfield:

'My daughter, flee temptation.'
'Mother, I will.' 101

Thus God, nature and duty in relation to the individual's conduct in society become one. It may appear that Charlotte has found a synthesis of the laws of society, nature and religion. But when we compare this scene with the final scenes of the novel, we find the solution dissolved and the synthesis broken, for the voice of 'Mother Nature' in the last scenes brings a completely different message. When in a similar situation Jane confronts another ordeal of making a choice between her passion for Rochester and the proposed religious life with St. John, she hears the voice of Rochester calling to her through nature and she breaks with St. John. In complying with this call of nature Jane "seemed to penetrate very near a Mighty Spirit." 102 In resisting St. John she appears to be fulfilling the will of God. 103

In the two scenes of Jane's ordeal contradictory and inconsistent values are assigned to nature and duty. In the earlier of the two scenes nature prompts Jane to adhere to the laws of society. But in the later scene when she decides

101 ibid. 102 ibid., Ch. XXXV, p. 439.
103 ibid., Ch. XXXVI, p. 440.
to return to Rochester, he is still burdened with a living wife for all that Jane knows. That is to say, her decision to return to him is a reversal of her earlier stand against passion. It is difficult to reconcile the two voices of nature — one calling for respecting the law of marriage and the other driving Jane to break it.

Further, the ambivalence in the treatment of the Calvinistic view of 'depraved nature' and the Christian humanistic view of 'divine nature' reveals a dichotomy in Charlotte's intellectual and emotional 'selves'. The asceticism implied in the Calvinistic view is intellectually acceptable. But it is emotionally rejected when the sensuous nature rebels against it. In *Jane Eyre* a struggle between nature and grace is said to have taken place in the soul of St. John; and the "singular gleams that scintillated in his eyes" are obviously the sign of the victory of grace over nature. It is also reflected in St. John's attitude to marriage. The relationship between man and woman on the marital plane is reduced to the orthodox Christian idea of marriage as a necessary evil. Jane does not contradict St. John's idea of nature as evil; she is rather moved by his ability to overcome the temptations of nature and,

104 *ibid.*, Ch. XXXV, p. 432.
at one stage, she is prepared to adopt his way of life. But she also believes in the purity of passion, the fulfilment of God's will in nature and in the spirituality of the experiences of the senses. 105

A confusion of Scripture and mythology, of Christianity and pantheism in Shirley shows a desperate attempt to reconcile the religious views with the sensuous nature. In this novel nature is presented as Eve in her evening prayers when "she and Adam stood alone on earth." It is very much like the Augustinian 'nature' before the Fall when everything was good and expressed the creative fecundity of God. Shirley's 'nature' is the mother of the great heroes of the past. Charlotte herself refers to Shirley's "mother Eve, in these days called Nature" as the mighty and mystical parent of Shirley's vision. 106 This is a confusion not only of Scripture and mythology, as noticed by Caroline, it is also a confusion of Christianity and pantheism. Shirley's 'nature' is the biblical nature before the Fall and also Wordsworthian in her exalting and elevating power. Like Wordsworth in his childhood, Shirley enjoys a "still, deep, inborn delight that glows in her young veins; unminged - untoubled - not to be reached or ravished by human agency, because by no human agency bestowed:

the pure gift of God to His creature, the free dower of Nature to her child." 107 As in the pantheistic concept of the divine spirit immanent in nature, 108 God and nature become one in this passage. Louis Moore's talk of a girl in whom a God-given strength asserted itself 109 reminds one of Wordsworth's glorification of the senses as the source of spiritual vision. Shirley's trance, when "her eye received no image; and yet a sense visited her vision," 110 is very much like Wordsworth's "blessed and serene mood" when

...the breath of this corporeal frame  
And even the motion of our human blood  
Is almost suspended, we are laid asleep  
In body, and become a living soul. 111

In Villette also nature is used in the sense of God. 112

In spite of the presentation of nature as divine, there is no evidence that Charlotte believed in a spiritual unity between man and the objects of nature. There is no assertion of the Wordsworthian belief that the same spirit informs the human mind and the external world of nature. 113

107 ibid., Ch. XXII, p. 102. 108 cf., Prelude, Bk. I, ll. 401 ff.
109 Shirley, Vol. II, Ch. XXVII, p. 239. 110 ibid., p. 242.
111 Tintern Abbey, ll. 43-6.
113 cf., Tintern Abbey, ll. 93-102.
She shows alternate awareness of nature's spirituality and divinity on the one hand, and of the excitements, power, attraction and beauty of the external world on the other. The response to the latter does not necessarily lead to a spiritual awareness nor is the awareness of the beauty and the power of the physical nature a necessary condition of spirituality. For example, St. John does not find nature a treasury of delight and yet he is dedicated to his vocation of spirituality, to his "foundation on earth for a mansion in heaven."  

This sense of separation between the spirit and the form of nature explains, to a great extent, the fact that more often than not the pictorial presentations of the external world are treated either for their own charm or as metaphors of human feelings. Very often the pictorial descriptions are reminiscent of the romantic return to nature in the sentimental novels. Wild scenes of nature, varying aspects of the sky, the musical notes of the birds, the greenery of the fields, the charming moonlit nights, the changing colours under the rising or setting sun etc. are described for their pictorial effect. These pictures of nature

114 Jane Eyre, Ch.XXX, p.389; Ch.XXXII, p.392.

115 vide ibid., Ch.XI, p.113; Ch.XII, p.113: Ch.XV, p.317; Villette, Vol.I, Ch.II, p.13; Ch.IV, pp.56,60,61: Ch.XII, pp.173, 177 etc.
are generally diffused and lack the quality of a local habitation. Most of the landscape pictures, unlike those of Charlotte Smith, are indefinite and vague. Charlotte Brontë’s landscapes are comparable with Mrs. Radcliffe’s. The mist, the cloud, the sky and the weather are used to suggest the vagueness of human passions and desires. This vagueness is further intensified by the evocation of a spiritual agency. For example, Jane and Rochester hear each other’s voice, although they are divided by a great distance. This telepathic communion suggests that their passion cannot be understood merely in moral or religious terms.

Like Mrs. Radcliffe, Charlotte uses natural scenery to reflect human emotions or to provide a background for the expression of tense human feelings. In these metaphorical uses of nature there is rather a parallelism (to use a geometrical metaphor) than an intersection of human feelings on one hand, and objects of nature on the other. Changes in moods and aspects of nature happen to coincide with human feelings and emotions. But, in such instances, there is no suggestion of a fusion of the inner and the external worlds. In this regard, she

117 Jane Eyre, ch. VII, p. 65; ch. XI, p. 120; ch. XV, p. 162 etc.; Villette, Vol. II, ch. XII, p. 404 etc.
contrasts with Anne Bronte in whose *Agnes Grey* "external
nature and internal emotion fuse into one experience...." 118

Most of the intended symbolical uses of nature result
in a failure as the meaning does not penetrate the image.
Changing seasons coinciding with human situations are devices
to illustrate human emotions. 119 In such scenes the symbols
do not have an 'inner' life of their own. Their value is
dependent on the meaning which is 'imposed' on the image of
nature. Jane Eyre feels that "Nature must be gladsome when
I was so happy." 120 It is obvious that the happiness in
nature is not an intrinsic one; it is subservient to Jane's
feelings. Similarly, the 'Eden-like' aspect of the splendid
midsummer has its reality because Jane "loved [Rochester]
so well." 121

However, there are some successful symbolical uses of
nature in Charlotte Bronte. Like her father, she was
fascinated by the wildest forces of nature. The storm
symbol, which so often recur in her novels, was received from
her father, 122 and the motif of storm and passion is quite

118 Inga-Stina Ewbank, *Their Proper Sphere* (London,
1966), p.56.
119 *Jane Eyre*, Ch.IX, p.88. 120 *ibid.* , Ch.XXIV, p.273.
121 *ibid.*, Ch.XXII, p.262; Ch.XXIII, p.263.
pronounced in her work. The storm and the wild manifestations of nature are used for their own sake and also as symbols of commotion and passion in human soul. Like the Gothic novelists, Charlotte presents storm and rain to heighten the emotional aspect of a scene surcharged with passion and energy. The passionate love scene between Jane and Rochester is an expression of pure joy and energy born in the union of two kindred souls. The figure of the two lovers is submerged in the life-giving rain and the all-sweeping energy of the wind. The moment of the passionate experience of joy becomes one with the wild manifestations of nature.

Like Mrs. Radcliffe, Charlotte also uses scenic descriptions of nature as a preparation of the reader into a state of mind most in harmony with the incidents to be narrated. In *Jane Eyre* the split boughs of the chestnut tree "struck by lightning in the night" anticipate the impending separation of Jane and Rochester. Similarly, Miss Marchmont's 'tale' in *Villette* tells as to how it was on a winter night, when she was waiting for her lover, she saw his horse with the dead body of the lover returning to her. Like the calm winter night, preceded by a stormy, rainy

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123 ibid., p.56; Gaskell, op.cit., p.105.
124 *Jane Eyre*, Ch.XXIII, p.272.
125 ibid., p.273.
weather, her own joyless state of mind was preceded by agitation and excitement of expectation.  

Moonlit nights appear to have a special fascination for Charlotte. In the manner of the Gothic novelists, the moon is frequently used by her as a machinery of the story. Jane first sees the figure of Rochester in the light of the moon "waxing bright"; Bessie comes to fear-haunted Jane in the 'still moonlight'; the crockery and porcelain appear to Robert Moore as the figure of Caroline "when broad moonbeams poured through the panes;" Miss Marchmont discovers her lover's horse in the light of the moon; Lucy Snowe has the vision of the nun in moonlight.

The moon is also used as a symbol of calm, repose and tenderness. The impulsive vehemence of Jane is calmed by the deeply religious words of Helen Burns. While they are reposing in silence, "some heavy clouds, swept from the sky by a rising wind, left the moon bare; and her light, streaming in through a window near, shone full both on us... ."

126 Villette, Vol.I, Ch.IV, p.61.  
127 Jane Eyre, Ch.XII, p.127.  
128 ibid., Ch.II, p.29.  
130 Villette, Vol.I, Ch.IV, p.51.  
131 ibid., Vol.II, Ch.XXVI, p.75.  
132 Jane Eyre, Ch.VIII, p.83.
In the light of this clear, unobstructed moon the sympathetic figure of Miss Temple is discovered. The moon is further associated with romantic visions and disillusionments. In Villette the moon is associated with the fulfilment of the purest dream of love as fresh and good as "those first fresh days of our great Sire and Mother" in the "Great Garden". Lucy and Emanuel Paul walk hand in hand by the moonlight,

such moonlight as fell on Eden - shining through the shades of the Great Garden, and happily gilding a path glorious for a step divine - a Presence nameless.

Pictures of the moon are associated with escape from the troubles and turmoils of society, with solitude and peace, with freedom from tyranny. It is also associated with the visions of unreality and dream-world. Most of these pictures of calm and commotion are Byronic. Like Byron, Charlotte was attracted by these aspects of nature because her own feelings and emotions found expression in them. Thus her attitude to nature is finally shaped by her desire to escape the repressions of emotion and to seek fulfilment of the inner urge to experience life passionately. This

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133 The Professor, Ch.XII, pp.92-4; Shirley, Vol.I, Ch.XIII, pp.364-70; Villette, Vol.I, Ch.IV, pp.50-1 etc.

134 ibid., Vol.II, Ch.XLI, p.399.

135 Shirley, Vol.I, Ch.XIII, pp.364,370; Villette, Vol.I, Ch.XII, p.177; Ch.XVIII, p.330 etc.
desire is presented in terms of the conflict in her own soul, which finds expression in her conflicting responses to nature.

Thus it is seen that in Charlotte Brontë's treatment of nature the elements of Gothic romanticism are present side by side with Victorian realism. The realistic setting of her stories imparts a character to the treatment of nature that is rarely found in her Gothic predecessors, for her romanticism is continuously subjected to the test of Victorian reality. The tension in the soul is related to the conflict between the claims of nature and society — society as Charlotte actually saw and knew. The world of the Gothic novels is a dream-world where supernatural and 'unreal' incidents are quite common. The world of Charlotte's novels is real; its problems are real; its inhabitants are real. Her characters work for their living, carry on business transactions, have problems of adjustment in society, are sincere and hypocrite according to their natures, are conscious of social obligations and can be selfish and benevolent, mild and violent in their dealings. Happenings in their lives take place in a real world of everyday experience. This realism in her novels places her romanticism in a different perspective from that of the Gothic romances — the perspective of reality.
II. EMILY BRONTÉ

Like Charlotte, Emily Brontë inherited her father's love of nature. They found Haworth and its moors "the only place on earth where they felt free and at one with those universal forces of nature from which they derived... lasting joy." It is said about Emily that she was never "happy nor well but on the sweeping moors that gathered round her home." The surroundings of the moor were the natural home of her wild, free and untamable spirit. She was, like Charlotte, fascinated by the elemental forces of nature. Again, both attached great importance to the inner life of the soul. But Charlotte did not unreservedly accept the purity of the inner life. She was caught in the web of law and impulse, both of which she desired to embrace simultaneously in spite of the inherent conflict between them. Her approach to nature was influenced by the desire of commitment to, and recoil from the impulse. It resulted from her attempts to reconcile the inner life of passion and

137 Gerin, Charlotte Brontë, p. xvi.
138 Gaskell, op. cit., p. 106.
emotion with the social life. That is why Charlotte's 'nature' can be understood in terms of reason and logical constructs. Her vision of life does not rise to that level of experience when the perceiver is conscious of a state of reality which claims recognition in its own right and he does not feel the need of explaining it in terms of social and ethical values. Emily Brontë, on the contrary, felt the reality of the inner world without being conscious of a need to explain it in terms of conventional values.

Emily's vision of the inner life is related to a purely personal experience. It arises out of the creations of the imagination and its reality is self-sufficient. The inner life is an antithesis of the 'material' life and it is similar to her visions of the life in eternity as distinguished from the life in the temporal world:

...long or short though life may be
'Tis nothing to eternity;
We part below to meet on high
Where blissful ages never die.

The eternity and the temporal world are separated by an impassable divide, and in this sense Emily's vision of life envisages a dual existence — an infinite, changeless existence of a transcendent world of eternity and the finite, everchanging existence of the temporal world.

Man's life in this world is a microcosm of these two planes of existence. Through imagination, he partakes of the changeless existence and through his body, he is related to the temporal existence in the phenomenal world. In Emily's view, imagination is a creative energy of the soul and its creations are an expression of the spiritual principle in man. The inner world is the creation of imagination and hence an expression of the spiritual principle. It has an existence independent of the world of things and hence immune to the principle of mortality of the material world. Thus in the inner world man has an immortal existence. The world of things on the other hand has a mortal existence because it is an expression of the material principle and lacks the creative energy, "a principle of life, intense/Lost to mortality". It is dark and grim, and full of "all the woe/Creation knows." The inner world, on the contrary, is "the heaven of glorious spheres...rolling on its course of light/In endless bliss through endless years." It is in itself a mystical vision of a state of existence of the soul because in it the creative energy finds expression and fulfilment beyond the needs of the material life. It is also symbolical of the soul's being

in the 'infinite' and its release from the temporal. It is not a state of annihilation but one of "unuttered harmony," of "the vision divine,"144 "when heaven drops not, when earth is still."145 Thus in imagination man has a living, spiritual principle through which he is linked with the "Undying Life" in eternity.145 In this regard a similarity between Blake and Emily Brontë is aptly pointed out by David Cecil.147

Emily Brontë's vision of the tragic human condition is related to her dual vision of life. As the two planes of existence are incompatible, the soul's life in eternity can find fulfilment only through the death of the life on earth. The condition of the embodied soul implies a conflict between its inner life and the habitual life of the 'self' in society. The soul, in its earthly existence, finds the habitual life of the self as an obstacle to the fulfilment of its spiritual life (which is the natural life of the soul because it is 'other' than the consciously individualised

144 ibid., No.190, p.239.  145 ibid., No.67, p.76.
146 cf., O God within my breast
Almighty ever-present Deity
Life, that in me has rest
As I Undying Life, have power in Thee (ibid., No. 191, p.243).
147 David Cecil, Early Victorian Novelists (London, 1964), p.120.
life of the self) and struggles for liberation.

Corresponding to the dual vision of life is Emily Bronte's dual attitude towards nature. Her response to the energy in nature is like the one to a spiritual principle which is immutable, although the forms of the objects in which it finds expression are mutable. Thus nature as energy is seen as a living principle. But nature as the world of things is seen as the expression of a material principle, for it is changing and corruptible. Emily's 'energy' is not to be confused with the modern scientific concept of energy as matter. In modern science matter is immanent energy, for it equates matter and energy. But Emily's response to the elemental forces of nature is trans-sensual, and they are felt as an expression of a transcendent energy. She looks beyond their objective forms to a trans-objective creativity. Things are felt as dead matter and hence an obstacle to the creativity of the transcendent energy.

Similarly, passion is a trans-sexual vitality and the senses and the sensual world are energy-resisting matter. Passion is a form of the energy of the soul. It is given the status of natural energy because it is different from the desires and aspirations of the habitual self. 148

148 cf., "[Wuthering Heights] is profoundly informed with the attitudes of 'animism' by which the natural world that world which is 'other' than and 'outside' of th.
It would appear that Emily's vision of the conflict between the inner life of man and his physical material life extended to the vision of a conflict between energy as a living principle in nature and things as 'dead'. The violent and wild forces of nature, like the passion in man, appear to be an expression of the struggle between the two principles in nature. Like the soul struggling for liberation from the body, the energy is perceived as struggling for release from the form containing it. Thus the elemental forces of nature become appropriate symbols of the spiritual struggle in man. The inner life of passion is symbolised by the form-destroying energy of nature and the habitual life in society is represented by the world of things.

In order to understand the meaning of nature as energy vis-a-vis the inner life of passion, it is necessary to realise the inadequacy of moral, social and religious interpretations of Emily Bronte's work. Sometimes critics read a philosophy of nature in Emily Bronte. Hence a comparison with


149 Herbert Read comments on the last two lines (quoted below, p.156) of a poem by Emily Bronte: "In these two lines she reaches a climax in her philosophy of nature, and shows a depth of emotional perception that not even Wordsworth could command." (*Reason and Romanticism*, New York, 1963, p.164).
Wordsworth might be rewarding. Both were deeply inspired by their visions of nature and felt her spiritual power. But there is an essential difference between their experiences of nature. Wordsworth had a harmonious vision of life in which the entire creation is seen as inhabited by a spiritual presence. His spiritual visions emanate from the perception of the beauty in the physical appearances of nature. He was led from the perception of the visual aspects of nature to the vision of the invisible spirit in them. Emily Brontë, on the contrary, had no single vision of life. Her spiritual visions were more often than not independent of the physical forms of nature. She appears to have been inspired more by the invisible elements than by the visible aspects of nature. Moreover, Wordsworth made a conscious effort to translate his experiences into a philosophy. His perception of nature is conceptualised because he related his experiences to moral and philosophical ideas. But Emily Brontë's perception of nature does not ossify into a philosophy and a rational system. Objects and


\[151\] vide Prelude (1850), Bk. I, 11.425-78.
emotions of her experiences are collateral and there is little evidence of a deliberate attempt to prove their reality by discovering a philosophical basis. It may be explained with reference to her personal need and to the difference between her situation and that of Wordsworth. Wordsworth's was a "conscious reaction against the mentality of the eighteenth century" that had become too artificial. His personal experiences would not have sufficed to counteract it. He had to refute and disprove the validity of the eighteenth-century world-view and establish that of the values derived from his personal experiences. It resulted in his 'philosophy' of nature. In Emily Brontë's case, the recourse to nature, as to feelings and emotions, was to meet a purely personal need. The desire for liberty was a passion with her. She was pained by the consciousness of the restraints of the life of the senses on that of the spirit. A note of deep anguish is heard when the world of things begins to intrude on the freedom of the soul. In Wordsworth the

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154 Gaskell, op. cit., p. 100.

155 cf., Hatfield, op. cit., No. 190, ll. 35-8, p. 239.
senses and the objects of nature are necessary means of spiritual consciousness. In Emily Brontë the senses and the objects on the one hand, and the passion and the elemental forces on the other are two different kinds of reality. There is no evidence that the sense experience is transmuted into spiritual consciousness. Moments of spiritual bliss in Emily Brontë are realised beyond the world of the senses. 156

However, Emily Brontë was responsive to the beauty of the objects of nature and, at times, she was attracted by her glorious forms. But Emily's vision of the spiritual existence envisages its independence from the world of things. As already stated, her dual vision of life implies the presence of a conflict between the spiritual and the material life of man. Wuthering Heights (the only novel she wrote) is a dramatic presentation of this conflict. The energy of the soul is represented by the passion of Heathcliff and Catherine. Their world is maintained by no other force but their own passion which is given "a natural force; natural and therefore immune to the moral

\[156\text{cf., I'm happiest when most away} \\
\text{***} \\
\text{***} \\
\text{When I am not and none beside -} \\
\text{But only spirit wandering wide} \\
\text{Through infinite immensity (ibid., No.44,p.63).}\]
considerations of men and women in the historical world." The Catherine-Heathcliff relationship is symbolised by the elemental forces and Wuthering Heights. Man's life in the world of things is represented by the formal, civilised and gentle life of the Lintons at Thrushcross Grange. It is symbolised by the calm and quiet appearances of nature.

Virginia Woolf's observation on the work of the Brontës that the aspects of nature carry on, as it were, the emotion and light up the meaning of the book is especially applicable to Wuthering Heights. Nature, in relation to the Heights, symbolises a destructive vitality and immortal energy which is at the core of the Catherine-Heathcliff relationship. The relentless fury and violence of the elemental forces are the 'objective correlative' of their soul-consuming passion. Early in the novel Lockwood notes:

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157 Denis Donoghue, "The Other Emily" in The Brontës, edited by Ian Gregor, p.165; cf., "Hypermorality is the basis of that challenge which is fundamental to Wuthering Heights" (Georges Bataille, Literature and Evil, London, 1973, p.10).


159 Mary Visick, The Genesis of Wuthering Heights (Hong Kong, 1957), pp.35-6.
Wuthering Heights is the name of Mr. Heathcliff's dwelling, 'wuthering' being a significant provincial adjective, descriptive of the atmospheric tumult to which its station is exposed in stormy weather. The 'conventional' Mr. Lockwood is a man of the world and it is natural that he is shocked by what he first sees there. It is in a rough and stormy weather that he seeks shelter at the Heights. While the storm has been raging outside, he, in his sleep, stretches his hand to seize the "importunate branch; instead of which my fingers closed on the fingers of a little, ice-cold hand! The intense horror of nightmare came over me."

It is a grim house in which Nelly Dean does not like to be left by herself and is afraid of going out in the dark. The surroundings of the Heights have an almost 'otherworldly' feature, where people "miss their roads on such evenings." Everything is unusual, dismal and violent here, which compels us to see it in a different perspective from the one in which we see everyday common objects. When Lockwood approaches the window to

164. ibid., un.XI, p.25.
examine the weather, he sees a sorrowful sight - "dark night coming down prematurely, and sky and hills mingled in one bitter whirl of wind and suffocating snow." 165 He finds the "glowing physical comforts" overcome by the dismal spiritual atmosphere, which anticipates the elemental drama of human life about which he is to know from Nelly Dean. As Nelly Dean unfolds the narrative of Heathcliff's life, she informs him that the evening of Heathcliff's disappearance "was...very dark for summer: the clouds appeared inclined to thunder...the storm came rattling over the Heights in full fury. There was a violent wind as well as thunder, and either one or the other split a tree off at the corner of the building: a huge bough fell across the roof, and knocked down a portion of the east chimney-stack sending a clatter of stones and soot into the kitchen fire." 166 This fury of the elements, although destroying the 'human comforts', is an expression of nature's spiritual sympathy for Heathcliff's separation from Catherine.

The association of the Heights with the elemental forces assumes a definite significance in the light of the fact that there is a similarity between Catherine's attachment to the Heights and her love for Heathcliff. Her longing for the Heights is an expression of her spiritual affinity with

165 ibid., p.28. 166 ibid., Ch.IX, p.83.
it, which is similar to her vision of an infinite existence in her identity with Heathcliff. Wuthering Heights is the world of freedom and life to her. She passionately, almost madly, longs for the feel of the wind on the moor: "Do let me feel it! - it comes straight down the moor - do let me have one breath," she exclaims with all the spirit in her weakening body. It is a sort of life-breath from her original and therefore 'natural' home. Thus the Heights is symbolical of a resting place for her spirit. It is a world in which, she feels, she would be united with 'herself': "I'm sure I should be myself were I once among the heather on those hills," she tells Nelly Dean. Similarly, Catherine identifies herself with Heathcliff and cannot think of the idea of separation from him:

My great miseries in this world have been Heathcliff's miseries...my great thought in living is himself. If all else perished and he remained, I should still continue to be; and if all else remained and he were annihilated, the universe would turn to a mighty stranger.

In contrast to the Heights stands the calm and quiet Thrushcross Grange. It lies in the valley protected from

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167 ibid., Ch.XII, p.115. 168 ibid. 169 ibid., Ch.IX, p.81; cf.,

Though Earth and moon were gone
And suns and universes ceased to be
And thou were left alone
Every Existence would exist in thee.

The fury of the elemental forces to which the former is continually exposed. Even Mr. Lockwood is in no danger of losing his way here. There is something almost tame and 'human' about its atmosphere. Nature here is mild and its presence is felt in its subdued form. Even inclement weather here does not have that threatening aspect that it has around the Heights. All this symbolises the 'material' life of the Grange. It is a prison to Catherine, and her fiery soul is in "a frightful isolation" here. Separated from Heathcliff and the Heights, she has been alienated from herself and from her world of liberty. Her soul is contracted in the 'cold materiality' of the Grange, and she feels "tired of being enclosed here. I'm trying to escape into that glorious world, and to be always there: not seeing it dimly through tears, and yearning for it through the walls of an aching heart; but really with it and in it."

The contrast between the Heights and the Grange illuminates the contrast between the Catherine-Heathcliff and the Catherine-Linton relationships. Catherine is conscious of the essential difference between her feelings for Heathcliff and Linton. Her love for the latter is of a conscious and limited nature — it is the love of men and

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170 *Wuthering Heights*, Ch.III, p.41.
171 ibid., Ch.XXII, pp.145-6.
172 ibid., Ch.XIV, p.138
173 ibid., Ch.XV, p.143.
women in the historical world. Therefore, it is reducible to moral considerations. Her reasons in marrying Linton are that he is rich and handsome, and a charming company. Her feelings for him are of a 'human' dimension and hence subject to time and change. But her feelings for Heathcliff are of a non-rational, 'non-human' kind and hence immune to the effects of the material existence. She tells Nelly Dean:

My love for Linton is like the foliage in the woods: time will change it,...as winter changes the trees. My love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rock beneath: a source of little visible delight, but necessary.175

The Catherine-Heathcliff relationship may be seen as belonging to a unique order of what Otto characterises as the numinous in the experience of the holy. He describes it as "a unique original feeling-response, which can be in itself ethically neutral and claims consideration in its own right." Emily Brontë has carefully placed Heathcliff's vision of identity with Catherine into what may be called "a set and lasting attitude of the soul, continuing, as it

174 Ibid., Ch. IX, p. 78.  175 Ibid., p. 81.


177 Ibid., p. 20.
were, thrillingly vibrant and resonant," an attitude different from "its 'profane' non-religious mood of everyday experience."178 When in the sight of his heaven, Heathcliff "had a strange, joyful glitter in his eyes" and appears "almost nothing — very much excited, and wild and glad."179 It is a heaven existing outside the temporal world. The Catherine-Heathcliff relationship is absolutely different from the Catherine-Linton relationship because the latter is limited to profane, human dimensions.

The two relationships are of two different orders — the limitless and the limited, the religious and the profane, the infinite and the finite, the spiritual and the worldly, the liberating and the imprisoning. Van Ghent observes, "Wuthering Heights exists for the mind as a tension between two kinds of reality, a restrictive reality of civilised manners and codes, and the anonymous unregenerate reality of natural energies."180 The two are exclusive as the soul is different from the body, the spirit from the matter, the life from the death and the eternal from the temporal. Catherine's sufferings result from her failure to see this exclusiveness of the two existences when she thinks that

178 ibid., pp.26-7. 179 Wuthering Heights, Ch.XXXIV,p.270.
180 Dorothy Van Ghent, "The Window Figure and the "wo Children Figure in Wuthering Heights," Nineteenth-Century Fiction, VII (December,1952), 189-90.
she can simultaneously live on both the planes, i.e., marry Linton and retain her identity with Heathcliff. Similarly, Heathcliff "in seeking to revenge... commits himself to a world that is not real for him." Catherine and Heathcliff are divided from their true world as a result of the assertion of the material symbolised by Catherine’s marriage. They are also divided from their true selves as they commit to the ways of the material world. Their relationship with this world is no doubt reducible to a moral interpretation but their relationship with each other lies outside the moral context.

Sometimes the Cathy-Hareton relationship is used to place the Catherine-Heathcliff relationship within a moral and social system. But no amount of interpretation of the Cathy-Hareton relationship will yield a moral order by which the Catherine-Heathcliff relationship can be judged. Like the Catherine-Linton relationship, the Cathy-Hareton relationship is placed in a moral context and continues the

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132 Ewbank, op.cit., p.98.
motif of the contrast between the Catherine—Linton and the Catherine—Heathcliff relationships. The Cathy—Hareton courtship is related to the worldly happiness and their love finds nourishment in the common, ordinary occupations of life. Significantly, their courtship is related to the benign, pliant and accommodating aspects of nature. Their earthly, 'human' occupations in the sweet and warm weather of a sunny April morning are in contrast with the nocturnal ramblings of Heathcliff. While Cathy and Hareton are concerned with the creature comforts which they can create for each other and which they can derive from nature, Heathcliff is occupied with the unearthly vision of 'one universal idea'. The order of existence to which the Cathy—Hareton relationship belongs is totally different from that for which Heathcliff aspires through his union with the image of Catherine. In contrast to the world of things to which the happiness of Cathy and Hareton is related stands the furious rain on the night of Heathcliff's death. Death and the form-destroying energy of nature become the symbol of that principle which culminates in the liberation of the soul from the body, of the spirit from the matter, of the life from the mortality. Everything is

185 Wuthering Heights, Ch.XXIV, p.270.
186 ibid., p.274; ch.XXIII, p.259.
submerged in rain and death which have opened the gate of
Heathcliff's heaven and "that of others is unvalued and
uncoveted" by him. 187

Thus it is seen that Emily Brontë's dual vision of
life and her dual response to nature are interconnected in
Wuthering Heights. The dual attitude to nature can be, in
a sense, traced to a tradition in Christianity. "'Nature,'
Augustine says, 'could not have been depraved by vice...
had it not been made out of nothing. Consequently, that it
is a nature this is because it is made by God; but that it
falls away from Him, this is because it is made out of
nothing'." 188 But Christianity attempted to reconcile this
dualism in the idea that the different scales of being
are an expression of God's creative fecundity and that they
are parts of a harmonious whole. This is because Christianity
was committed to the idea of an omnipotent, good God. But
Emily Brontë was not necessarily committed to the conventional
Christian view of God. The god of her mystical experiences
is "a creedless immortal energy." 189 She has apparently

187 ibid., Ch. XXXIV, p. 276.
189 Visick, op. cit., p. 35.
discarded the conventional antithesis of good and evil and adopted that of the spiritual and the material. She saw this dualism as irreconcilable, and there is no evidence that she believed in the possibility either of a harmony of the two or of the sublimation of the material into the spiritual.

Emily's dual vision is essentially different from the dualism of man and nature in Tennyson and Arnold. Her dualism is that of the two planes of existence, that is to say, man's life in the world of things is of a material nature and his inner life of imagination is of a spiritual order. Similarly, nature itself is seen under two aspects. As matter it is inanimate and as energy it is a living principle. This dual order, which is dramatically presented in Wuthering Heights, is lyrically expressed in one of her poems. The following lines from this poem can be taken as a sort of summing up of her vision of human life as well as nature:

The Earth that wakes one human heart to feeling
Can centre both the worlds of Heaven and Hell. 190

In the more common romantic tradition a 'naturalist' thesis of the discordant elements of life is presented to suggest an harmonious order of the universe. Emily Brontë

190 Hatfield, op. cit., p. 256.
does not offer any such resolution of the elements of duality in life. Instead, she uses nature as living and as dead to illuminate the spiritual and the material principles in life, which gives a uniqueness to her treatment of man and nature in Wuthering Heights. The vision of the unresolved tension in the earthly life of the soul makes the spiritual assume the proportions of the 'natural', for the two opposed conceptions of life give, by contrast, an added meaning as well as credibility to each other. By relating the spiritual passion of man to his natural life, Emily Brontë has been able to impart a sense of 'realism' to the spiritual destiny of man, which is not merely a conjecture or an intellectual exercise but a deeply felt and intensely experienced reality.

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191 cf., "Wuthering Heights represents...not the statement of a 'naturalist' thesis, or a return to primitive instinct, but a genuine clash of emotional states; and it is the clash, not the thesis, or even an attempt at resolution, that gives the novel its unique character and power." Derek Traversi, "The Brontë Sisters and Wuthering Heights," in From Dickens to Hardy, edited by Boris Ford (Penguin Books, 1958), p.259.