

year, or about seven-and-a-half shillings a week, while working as a governess at Upperwood House in Rawdon, West Yorkshire; her small income was further reduced by a deduction of about £4 per annum for laundry. Her younger sister, Anne, was paid £40 a year (or £10 per quarter) for her work as a governess at Thorpe Green Hall—about 15 shillings per week.<sup>81</sup> That was considered to be a very favorable salary—one near the upper end of the range for what a governess could earn at that time. And so one ream of high-grade “post”—or the approximate amount of paper that Brontë required for copying out *Shirley*—could have easily cost a woman employed as a governess an entire week of her salary, if not more. Although Brontë's earning potential had significantly increased as of 1847 with the sale of *Jane Eyre*, the cost of paper was still not inconsequential.<sup>82</sup>

In *Advice to Authors*, Brontë would have read that it was “common practice . . . to write only on one side of the leaf, and to leave the opposite, or under page, blank.”<sup>83</sup> This is generally the practice she followed. But instead of ruling her own paper or purchasing pre-ruled paper (as is suggested by *Advice to Authors*), Brontë likely used a separate, heavily ruled leaf of paper, such as the one kept in her writing desk, to slip under the surface of her letter paper.<sup>84</sup> When I placed the extant ruled leaf from Brontë's desk under a leaf of London Superfine paper stock, its dark lines showed through the writing paper, which suggests that the leaf could have readily served as a guide for the copying of her manuscripts. The use of a ruled leaf would have allowed Brontë to regulate the number of lines per page and thus systematize the pace and flow of her novels.<sup>85</sup>

If this were the case, the ruled leaf that Brontë used would have provided a margin of at least 2 cm on the left-hand side of each bifolium onto which she wrote out the fair copies of her manuscripts—an inference supported by the fairly uniform registration of the leaves in the manuscript of *Shirley*. Part of this left-hand margin could have been removed at the printing house if the bifolia were sliced instead of slit; the remaining margin was likely trimmed yet again as part of the later binding process commissioned by George Smith. Brontë copied out her novel nearly flush with the right-hand margin of the leaves; occasionally

81. Juliet Barker, *The Brontës* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1994), 351.

82. Brontë was paid £100 for the copyright of *Jane Eyre*, and received an additional £400 in payments for the novel. She was paid £500 for *Shirley*. *Letters*, 1:541, 2:262.

83. *Advice to Authors* (London: Saunders and Otley, n.d.), 7.

84. Ruled leaves were ephemeral, and created on an *ad hoc* basis. The extant ruled leaf that I studied at the Brontë Parsonage Museum in 2019 is made of wove paper. It measures 19.25 cm wide (across the leaf); 23 cm long (top to bottom). The leaf was ruled in pencil first, then in ink. It was made of a thicker weight paper than the other writing papers I found in her desk. This example has a 1.1 cm margin on the left side of the template. The lines were ruled approximately 1 cm apart from one another, with 21 lines ruled on the leaf, allowing for 22 spaces for text. I identified two small holes punctured into the sheet above and below line 6 from the bottom of the device.

85. Brontë came to adopt the use of a ruled leaf later in her process as a writer. The outset of her first manuscript intended for publication, “The Professor,” does not seem to follow any systematic ruling—nor do the earlier manuscripts generally referred to as the juvenilia. But she employed a ruled leaf consistently afterward in composing her manuscripts for *Jane Eyre*, *Shirley*, and *Villette*. See “Authors and Bookmakers,” 473. (In 2012, I detected the use of a ruled surface in the fair-copy manuscript of *Jane Eyre*, before locating an example of a ruled leaf, which I was able to do in 2019, during my research into the extant contents of the Brontës' writing desks.)