

rejected by her publishers.¹³⁴ Cumulatively, this evidence suggests that Brontë revisited and revised the first chapter sometime after August 24.

Even so, it is difficult to determine exactly what revisions were made to the chapter. There is significant variation occurring between the "A" pencil numbering sequence and the "B" brown-ink numbering of the leaves, suggesting that Brontë may have made additional changes in the pencil draft that likely served as the updated copy text for the fair-copy manuscript.¹³⁵ As table 4 shows, the penciled leaf numbering skips from "10" to "13"—evidence that suggests that two pages' worth of draft material could have been set aside at the last moment as Brontë edited the chapter. Notably, the penciled numbering ends with f. 22—a detail that leads one to wonder whether Brontë had set out to replace all 22 leaves that may have originally constituted chapter one, before making additional last-minute changes that led her to withdraw ff. 11 and 12, and that necessitated an additional leaf (viz., the unpaginated, recycled leaf bearing the *Shirley* title page on its verso).

The full case becomes somewhat clearer upon reviewing Brontë's correspondence alongside this bibliographical evidence. On February 4, 1849, Brontë mailed the first volume of her manuscript to her publisher with an accompanying letter including the following disclaimer: "The Manuscript has all its errors upon it, not having been read through since copying."¹³⁶ Although W. S. Williams' reply has not survived, in Brontë's correspondence with the firm later that month about their "objections" to the first chapter, she wanted to know in particular their reasons for requesting a change: "I should like you to explain to me more fully the ground of your objections—is it because you think this chapter will render the work liable to severe handling by the press? Is it because knowing as you now do the identity of 'Currer Bell'—this scene strikes you as unfeminine—? Is it because it is intrinsically defective and inferior—? I am afraid the first two reasons would not weigh with me—the last would."¹³⁷

Apparently, Brontë soon afterward received a reply from Williams that, in her words, was "calculated to command careful consideration."¹³⁸ It seems that Williams and Taylor had advised her to "give up Malone and Donne"—two curates who undergo satirical treatment in the published version of the novel, but who may have been subject to even harsher treatment in an earlier version, given that her publishers apparently had told her that the chapter pushed the boundaries of good taste and "artistic treatment." In addition, Brontë's letter sug-

134. On August 21, 1849, Brontë writes to W. S. Williams: "If I remember rightly my Cornhill critics object to 'Hollow's Mill,' nor do I now find it appropriate. It might rather be called 'Fieldhead'—though, I think 'Shirley' would perhaps be the best title: 'Shirley,' I fancy, has turned out the most prominent and peculiar character in the work. Cornhill may decide between 'Fieldhead' and 'Shirley.'" See *Letters*, 2:237. Brontë did refer to the manuscript as "Shirley" in a communication sent on March 1, 1849 to James Taylor; notably, this was after she sent the first draft (and presumably the prior title of "Hollow's Mill") to Smith, Elder on February 4, 1849. See *Letters*, 2:188.

135. The leaf numbering for the first chapter is likely not part of the "A" and "B" sequences described but was introduced during a later pencil-and-ink revision (as with the brown-ink "D" sequence).

136. *Letters*, 2:176.

137. *Letters*, 2:181.

138. *Letters*, 2:185.