

father, who required medicines, blisters, and other treatments, Charlotte focused on looking after her loved ones.¹⁰² In January, she writes to Williams: "My literary character is effaced for the time . . . care of Papa and Anne is necessarily my chief present object in life to the exclusion of all that could give me interest with my Publishers or their connexions."¹⁰³ Her choice of the word "effaced" is suggestive here: in her correspondence with her publishers during this period, she sought to separate "Charlotte Brontë" from "Currer Bell," indicating a pivot from the latter (masculine) identity: "Should Anne get better, I think I could rally and become Currer Bell once more."¹⁰⁴ In February 1849, when Anne showed some signs of recovery, Brontë wrote to her publisher about her attempted endeavor to resume her work on the novel, even as she continued to look after Anne, who had by that time had been diagnosed with tuberculosis. Even at this point, Charlotte seems only to have been able to return to the novel sporadically. In February, she writes: "I wish it were more than a commencement, for how it will be re-united after the long break, or how it can gather force of flow when the current has been checked—or rather drawn off so long—I know not."¹⁰⁵ It was at this point that she was likely completing work on the end of volume 2 in a series of interrupted, brief intervals, as evidenced by the varying stocks of paper, as described earlier.

Although Gaskell writes that Brontë did not begin work on volume 3 until after Anne's death, it seems clear that Brontë did draft and copy out the volume's first three chapters intermittently during the first half of 1849. Brontë's mixed use of paper continues within the first 56 leaves of volume 3—starting with "The Valley of the Shadow of Death"—which were copied out irregularly on Cream Laid paper, as well as on watermarked laid paper (yet again on leaves without any apparent alterations to their numbering). The abrupt changes in paper stocks may reflect another important fluctuation in Brontë's life at that time: the erratic intervals during which Anne's health temporarily improved before further declining.¹⁰⁶ Brontë likely wrote on whatever high-grade writing paper was at hand as she copied out her work in various spurts. She seems to have regained her momentum only toward the end of copying out these very difficult chapters, whose heroine, narrowly recovering from the brink of death, was loosely mod-

102. After Branwell's death, Charlotte became ill, and, upon recovering in the autumn, she tended to her sisters, as well as her father and their servant, Tabitha Aykroyd, who was "suffering under serious indisposition" in November 1848; see *Letters*, 2:132. Emily refused professional medical assistance as well as other treatments, such as homeopathy; see *Letters*, 2:142, 145, 146–147, 150, 152. Charlotte sought medical advice and kept a careful eye on her sister, despite Emily's dogged reluctance to be helped. Charlotte finally convinced Emily to try homeopathic medicine in early December, and she drew up a detailed account of Emily's malady; but then Emily refused to take the medicine when it was received, and she died shortly afterward. See *Letters*, 2:154. In late December, Charlotte was caring for her father and Anne, who became ill with influenza; *Letters*, 2:159, 165. In January, Charlotte was nursing Anne, which included administering and dressing blisters and giving her cod-liver oil (*Letters*, 2:166) and also ordering a respirator to help with her breathing (*Letters*, 2:171). Charlotte herself suffered from "pains" in her chest and back, which she treated with "pitch plasters and bran tea"; see *Letters*, 2:169.

103. *Letters*, 2:168.

104. *Letters*, 2:168.

105. *Letters*, 2:181.

106. See *Letters*, 2:181, 189, 191, 196.