The manuscript contains a number of conspicuous partial-leaf excisions that require interpretation. Although one critic has speculated that the paper was cut away with sewing scissors, it is more likely that Brontë made the excisions with the blade of a quill cutter[42] to remove portions of leaves (and their text) from the manuscript during various stages of its composition and revision. I note 28 partial-leaf excisions made by Brontë—just one more than was identified by Herbert Rosengarten and Margaret Smith, the editors of the 1979 Clarendon edition, which remains the most textually authoritative edition of the novel to date.[43] Rosengarten and Smith argue that these partial-leaf excisions, combined with other revisions to the document, "reflect Charlotte's difficulties in writing the novel."[44] Surveying the many changes made to volumes 2 and 3, they note Brontë's "'dark and desolate' period of bereavement in 1849," and they argue that, when compared to the fair-copy manuscript volumes of *Jane Eyre*, the manuscript volumes of *Shirley* offer "physical evidence of Charlotte's greater uncertainty of composition and more laborious revision."[45] Notably, the Clarendon editors rely on a biographical explanation for many of these changes, including the weight of Emily Brontë's death on her sister: the "painful, even raw, reality, that will not, perhaps, easily be adapted into the fictional framework."[46] One comes away with the overwhelming sense that the excisions to the manuscript are akin to scars—physical scars—resulting from the real and multiple traumas that Brontë endured while writing it. Recently this sentiment has been echoed, if not somewhat distorted, by another critic, who characterizes the manuscript as "a text of grief" that "makes material a sorrowful mind."[47] Yet, while the death of Charlotte Brontë's sisters unquestionably influenced the writing of the novel, this tendency to interpret the manuscript through the lens of biography has obscured our understanding of it. So powerful has been the pull of this wrenching

42. I discuss these aspects in more detail below with respect to Ileana Marin's study of the manuscript.

43. The Clarendon edition of *Shirley* uses the first edition as its copy text, and incorporates emendations "wherever possible" from the manuscript or second edition. As part of that enterprise, editors Rosengarten and Smith attempt to identify all of the significant revisions that Brontë made to the manuscript; their careful analysis was limited, however, by their methods in examining the manuscript itself. The various states of the manuscript and its stages of composition become evident when analyzing the paper stocks along with the manuscript's multiple forms of leaf/page numbering. The Clarendon editors do not identify the former (it was not part of the scope of their project), and they document the latter only in part. Notably, the final page-numbering so often referred to by scholars was not made by Brontë at all, but rather was the work of BM curators who foliated the manuscript in the twentieth century—circumstances that I describe in more detail below.

44. *Shirley*, Clarendon edition, xxvi.

45. Ibid.

46. *Shirley*, Clarendon edition, xxvii.

47. In *The Brontë Cabinet*, Deborah Lutz claims that the "alterations and deletions multiply" in volume 3—the portion of the manuscript written after Anne's death—when in fact the majority of excisions occur in volumes 1 and 2. She does not cite her sources, other than correspondence collected in Margaret Smith's edition, so it is unclear how she came to this particular conclusion. See *The Brontë Cabinet: Three Lives in Nine Objects* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2015), 184.