



**RG** Reader's  
Guides

# Brontë's **Jane Eyre**

Zoe Brennan



continuum

**BRONTË'S *JANE EYRE***

### **Continuum *Reader's Guides***

Continuum *Reader's Guides* are clear, concise and accessible introductions to classic literary texts. Each book explores the themes, context, criticism and influence of key works, providing a practical introduction to close reading and guiding the reader towards a thorough understanding of the text. Ideal for undergraduate students, the guides provide an essential resource for anyone who needs to get to grips with a literary text.

- Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* – Ode Ogede
- Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* – Gina Wisker
- Austen's *Emma* – Gregg A. Hecimovich
- Borges' Short Stories – Rex Butler
- Bram Stoker's *Dracula* – William Hughes
- Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* – Gail Ashton
- Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* – Allan Simmons
- Dickens's *Great Expectations* – Ian Brinton
- Eliot's *Middlemarch* – Josie Billington
- Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* – Nicolas Tredell
- Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman* – William Stephenson
- James's *The Turn of the Screw* – Leonard Orr
- Joyce's *Ulysses* – Sean Sheehan
- Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* – Sarah Graham
- Shelley's *Frankenstein* – Graham Allen
- William Blake's *Poetry* – Jonathan Roberts
- Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* – Janet Winston

# **BRONTË'S *JANE EYRE***

*A Reader's Guide*

ZOE BRENNAN



continuum

**Continuum International Publishing Group**

The Tower Building      80 Maiden Lane  
11 York Road              Suite 704  
London SE1 7NX          New York, NY 10038

www.continuumbooks.com

© Zoe Brennan 2010

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the publishers.

Zoe Brennan has asserted her right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988, to be identified as Author of this work.

**British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data**

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN: 9781847062604 (hardcover)  
9781847062611 (paperback)

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Brennan, Zoe, 1971–

Brontë's *Jane Eyre* / Zoe Brennan.

p. cm. – (Reader's guides)

Includes index.

ISBN 978-1-84706-261-1 (pbk.) – ISBN 978-1-84706-260-4 (hardcover)

1. Brontë, Charlotte, 1816–1855. *Jane Eyre*.

I. Title. II. Title: *Jane Eyre*. III. Series.

PR4167.J5B74 2010

823'.8–dc22

2010001102

Typeset by Newgen Imaging Systems Pvt Ltd, Chennai, India  
Printed and bound in India by Replika Press PVT Ltd

To Jonny, Ike and Monty, Mum and Dad, Ann

*This page intentionally left blank*

## CONTENTS

<i>Note about Edition</i>	viii
1. Contexts	1
2. Language, Style and Form	15
3. Reading <i>Jane Eyre</i>	33
4. Critical Reception and Publishing History	97
5. Adaptation, Interpretation and Influence	113
<i>Works Cited and Further Reading</i>	129
<i>Index</i>	139



## NOTE ABOUT EDITION

All page references for *Jane Eyre* correspond to the following edition of the novel:

Charlotte Brontë. *Jane Eyre*. 1847. Ed. Richard Nemesavari. Ontario: Broadview, 2000.

## CHAPTER 1

### CONTEXTS

#### BRONTË'S LIFE

Charlotte Brontë was born in Yorkshire on 21 April 1816, the third of six children. In 1820 her father Patrick accepted the post of curate at Haworth parsonage, moving his family to the place that they were to call home for much of their life. Tragically, the following year Charlotte's mother Maria died and as one biographer explains: 'It created an insecurity so severe that it can be said without exaggeration that all their lives not one of them was able to cope successfully with life outside the parsonage walls' (Peters 1975: 6). Yet outside its walls they were sent as Patrick, with help from a bursary, placed the four older girls in the Clergy Daughters' School at Cowan Bridge in the summer of 1824. Readers of *Jane Eyre* will be familiar with the institution as Lowood is based on Brontë's memories of her time there. Students suffered from its draconian rules, lack of heating and barely edible food. Charlotte's older sisters Elizabeth and Maria (on whom she modelled Helen Burns) soon became fatally consumptive, and when typhus swept the school Patrick fetched his two younger daughters home.

Back at Haworth the remaining siblings, Charlotte, Emily, Anne and Branwell, drew closer together. Fascinated by some wooden soldiers bought for them by their father, they set about constructing an intricate fantasy universe centred on these figures and their exploits in the fictional kingdom of Angria. Gathering together their writings they bound them into miniature volumes modelled on the popular journals of the day such as *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, copies of which they borrowed from their father's collection.

In 1831 Brontë was sent to the Roe Head boarding school run by the Misses Wooler, and it is there she made two firm friends with whom she went on to correspond throughout her life, the conservative Ellen Nussey and more unconventional Mary Taylor. After a year and a half, having learnt all the school could offer, the 16-year-old Brontë returned home. Outwardly she was very studious, painfully shy and displayed a keen sense of duty, but her letters suggest these feelings warred with her internal desire for excitement and anger at hypocrisy.

Drawn back into her fictional universe, Brontë, alongside her siblings, continued her literary apprenticeship. She produced longer stories based on the adventures of two brothers, one of whom, the Duke of Zamorna, was a Byronic anti-hero and Rochester prototype. Although there is some truth in Q. D. Leavis' observation that 'a fictional daydream world' persisting into adult life meant that from 'being the most precocious of children they became retarded adults', it also shows the seriousness with which they took their writing (1966: 174). Brontë's desire to pursue a literary career led her to send a letter to the poet laureate Robert Southey asking his opinion of some of her poems. Remarkably he replied, stating kindly that she had a 'gift' but as a woman should only think of writing as a hobby: 'Literature cannot be the business of a woman's life, and it ought not to be.' This recommendation says much about the literary world that Brontë dreamed of entering (Peters 1975: 54). Even with talent, it was regarded as no place for the middle-class woman whose 'proper' sphere was the home. Thanking Southey for his advice, she fortunately did not abide by it for any length of time.

However Brontë felt unable to make a living from writing and so turned to teaching, one of the few paths available to the impoverished daughters of the rapidly expanding middle class. Returning to Roe Head she taught for a mentally demanding three years before retreating home in the spring of 1838, suffering from exhaustion. She then briefly became

a governess in two different households where she felt caught in limbo between her employers and the domestic staff, complaining in letters that: 'I find it so difficult to ask either servants or mistress for anything I want, however much I want it' (Barker 1997: 89).

Planning to open their own school, Charlotte and Emily set off for the academy of Madame Heger in Brussels to learn French and add to the 'accomplishments' that they could offer prospective students. Brontë's experiences here were to later form the basis of her novels *The Professor* and *Villette*. She became obsessed with the principal's flirtatious husband Monsieur Heger who either was unaware of her feelings or underestimated their strength. Not so his wife who subtly manoeuvred Charlotte out of the school in 1844.

At Haworth once more, Brontë wrote letters to Heger that were full of barely controlled longing. Attempts to find pupils for the school were unsuccessful and she felt responsible for her half-blind father, fulfilling a role of self-denial and filial duty that was deemed appropriate for 'spinsters'. On reaching 30 she wrote despairingly to Nussey: 'if I *could* leave home Ellen – I should not be at Haworth now – I know life is passing away and I am doing nothing' (Barker 1997: 156).

In the spring of 1846, inspired by some of Emily's writing, Brontë persuaded her sisters to collaborate on a volume of poetry. They secretly paid for it to be published under the pseudonyms of Currer (Charlotte), Ellis (Emily) and Acton (Anne) Bell (Hoeveler 1997: 142). Although it only sold a couple of copies it received some favourable reviews, enough to encourage them to try and find publishers for the novels on which they had been working: Charlotte's *The Professor* about a young man setting up a school, Emily's tale of obsession and revenge *Wuthering Heights* and Anne's story of a mistreated governess, *Agnes Grey*. Thus began a dispiriting round of sending off manuscripts and receiving rejections. In the meantime, Brontë started writing *Jane Eyre* while caring for her father as he convalesced from a series of eye operations.

Success finally came a year or so later when *Agnes Grey* and *Wuthering Heights* were accepted by T. C. Newby. Although *The Professor* was turned down by Smith, Elder and Company they sent Charlotte a supportive letter expressing interest in any three-volume novel she might write. In response Brontë dispatched to them the recently finished manuscript of *Jane Eyre* and within six weeks it was published, on 19 October 1847, to public acclaim and largely critical approval.

Branwell was conspicuously absent from this literary activity having become addicted to alcohol and drugs and upon whose excessive behaviour Bertha's is thought to be based. Although Charlotte had lost patience with him, his death from alcoholism in the autumn of 1848 tainted her pleasure at *Jane Eyre*'s success as did the negative reviews Emily received for *Wuthering Heights*. Within eight months of Branwell's funeral, first Emily and then Anne died from tuberculosis. Despite feeling the pressure of producing a worthy successor to *Jane Eyre*, Brontë's writing sustained her during this bleak time and the result was *Shirley* published towards the end of 1849. It dramatizes the effects of modernization on the Yorkshire mill workers of the early nineteenth century as seen through the eyes of the eponymous protagonist. Criticized for lacking the excitement that marked the earlier novel it garnered mixed reviews.

Around this time Brontë emerged from behind the mask of Currer Bell and visited her publishers in London where she touched the edges of the literary scene and met some of her heroes: the social commentator Harriet Martineau and novelists Elizabeth Gaskell and William Thackeray. Brontë was nervous beforehand, shy when socializing and exhausted afterwards which meant that visits to the capital were rare. Her next novel *Villette* (1853) was another reworking of her time in Belgium, charting the fortunes of the school-teacher Lucy Snowe. It was well received as full of passion and insightful characterization and many readers believe it to be her most insightful and sophisticated work.

Having turned down a number of marriage proposals over the years, from Ellen's brother Henry, Reverend David Pryce and James Taylor who managed her publisher's offices, Brontë accepted an offer from her father's curate, Arthur Nicholls, and they married on June 1854. Although Mr Brontë had initially disapproved of Nicholls' feelings towards his daughter and Brontë herself had not been swept away by his intentions, he eventually won them both around with his dignified persistence and affection.

Surprising herself, she claimed to be content as Mrs Brontë Nicholls writing to Ellen fondly about her husband and describing her busy life as a vicar's wife, which nonetheless meant less time for writing. She soon became pregnant and, never physically strong, died, most likely from hyperemesis gravidarum (the name given to excessive vomiting during pregnancy), on 31 March 1855 aged only 38.

### THE BRONTË MYTH

The facts of Brontë's short life are relatively well known, in part because much of her lifelong correspondence with Ellen Nussey remains intact. Proud of her friend's literary career, Nussey urged Mr Brontë to contact Elizabeth Gaskell regarding the chronicling of his daughter's life. Gaskell, who had been intrigued by Brontë in their relatively brief friendship, was happy to oblige and in 1857, only two years after her death, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* became a best-seller, fuelling interest in the Brontës generally and leading to the publication of *The Professor* (1857).

Gaskell's biography inaugurated the still influential 'Brontë myth' which represents the five talented siblings cloistered together in a remote parsonage using their writing to create a fantasy world into which they could escape from their repressive father. Charlotte is figured as a romantic who found it difficult to reconcile her artistic and personal passions with the narrow life she was forced to lead. Once the facts of her life became known it was tempting for *Jane Eyre*'s readers to consider its protagonist a thinly veiled version of

the author, ignoring the fact that Jane, for the large part, has no family ties while Brontë cared for her siblings and father until her early death. Over the years there have been numerous interpretations of the Brontës' lives, and the biographical industry based around them remains healthy as people continue to be fascinated by the family that produced such compelling novels as *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*.

A similar attempt to understand the genesis of the Brontës' work drives the study of their juvenilia, the term applied to an author's childhood writing. Readers can trace Brontë's changing concerns and development as a writer in her Angrian stories. Predictably as she moves from childhood into adolescence they increasingly reflect a burgeoning sexuality with portrayals of smouldering heroes and passionate romances. Famously, on a scrap of paper (ca. 1839) she wrote what has subsequently been labelled her 'farewell to Angria':

I long to quit for a while that burning clime where we have sojourned too long – its skies flame – the glow of sunset is always upon it – the mind would cease from excitement and turn now to a cooler region where the dawn breaks grey and sober, and the coming day for a time at least is subdued by clouds (see Tillotson 1954: 273).

Using natural imagery to capture her interior drama as she does in *Jane Eyre*, Brontë felt she had to leave the 'the world below', as she nicknamed Angria, and develop a more realistic style. This sort of information about her early writing reminds readers that she had a long apprenticeship in the craft and also had her sisters with whom to mull over artistic matters. Kathleen Tillotson makes this point when she states: '*Jane Eyre* is no mysterious first-born offspring of adverse circumstance and untaught genius; it is the culmination of years of writing by one of a family of . . . long-practised writers' (263).

**Literary context (see further discussion of literary genre in Chapter 2)**

During the decade of *Jane Eyre*'s publication the novel was 'in the process of becoming the dominant form' replacing the poem in terms of popularity (Tillotson 1954: 13). One well-known poem that makes an appearance in *Jane Eyre* is Sir Walter Scott's epic *Marmion: A Tale of Flodden Field* published in 1808, which St John buys for Jane. It is a symbol of his affection as it would have cost the equivalent of a week's worth of his disposable income (Eliot 2000: 9). It also helps fix the period in which the novel is set as Jane refers to it as a 'new publication' (467). Not only was Scott's poetry popular but also his historical fictions, such as *Rob Roy* (1817) and *Ivanhoe* (1819), and he is credited with helping to lend the increasingly fashionable novel form an air of literary respectability.

As the example of *Marmion* suggests, despite the fact that advances in mechanical printing meant mass production was easier and so books cheaper, they remained relatively costly. Helping to alleviate the expense were the new lending libraries the first of which opened in the early 1840s. People paid an annual fee to borrow books and they quickly became an established part of the cultural scene to the extent that when *Jane Eyre* was published one reviewer suggested that the reader place it 'at the top of your list to be borrowed' (Anon 1847: 47–48). Libraries drove the system whereby a text was split into three separate volumes, the famous triple-decker that dominated the publishing industry until the 1890s and the format in which *Jane Eyre* first appeared.

Alongside innovations in form and distribution, the 1840s saw changes in fiction's subject matter with a movement away 'from extravagant romance to domesticity, from the extremes of high and low life to the middle class' (Tillotson 1954: 5). These 'extremes' to which Tillotson refers include the so-called Newgate novels that dramatized the life of real criminals and the silver-fork novels that produced tales of fashionable high life. Authors such as Charles Dickens in *Dombey and*



*Son* (1848) and William Thackeray in *Vanity Fair* (1848) turned their gaze from these social groups to instead satirize the fears and aspirations of the rapidly expanding mercantile and professional class.

As for women writers in this period, it is estimated that '20 per cent of all published Victorian writers were female' (Purchase 2006: 75). This is a relatively large percentage considering the disapprobation with which their participation in the male-dominated realm of literary production was generally greeted. Southey's comments to Brontë are representative of the view that women should not attempt to write professionally. It is a perspective that helps explain Brontë's decision to publish under a non-gender specific name, hoping that her work would be judged on its own merits. Famous nineteenth-century women writers include Brontë's predecessor Jane Austen, whose work she considered lacked poetry and passion, her contemporary Elizabeth Gaskell and later, into the 1850s and beyond, George Eliot.

## HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

Brontë was born in a Britain that was transforming itself into the world's leading mercantile nation. The Industrial Revolution of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century had sent country-dwellers flocking to towns and cities where they hoped to find work and a better life. Instead they were greeted with inadequate housing, long hours and paltry pay which led to large-scale poverty, violence and the exploitation of the most vulnerable. Benjamin Disraeli's 1846 'Condition of England' novel *Sybil* was subtitled *The Two Nations*, gesturing to the divide between rich and poor. The former group consisted not only of the aristocracy but also an expanding middle class, a commercial 'gentry'. Growing symbiotically alongside this sector of society, with its increased leisure time and better rates of literacy, was the novel. As discussed above, the form was becoming increasingly popular, serving to disseminate and validate middle-class values and in this context *Jane Eyre* can be seen as tracing

the protagonist's movement towards her fate as one of their number (Purchase 2006: 24).

With increased manufacturing came the need for more markets abroad which helped to push forward the British imperial project. While it paid lip-service to its civilizing mission it was largely driven by capitalist concerns. In the middle of the century Britain's navy controlled the world's shipping lanes making it the world's trader (Harvie 2000: 118). The Great Exhibition at Crystal Palace (1851) heralded the beginning of an increased period of nationalistic fervour as it celebrated Britain's industrial and imperial might, exhibiting modern inventions and artefacts from different parts of the empire. Obviously impressed, Brontë visited the exhibition five times.

*Jane Eyre* was written against this backdrop and the Empire's shadowy presence is discernible in the fact that Rochester visited Jamaica, part of the British West Indies, to make his fortune by marrying Bertha, a Creole. This is an ambiguous term used to describe both a white person born in a colony and a person of mixed European and black descent. Either way, she is situated as Other to the ethical and 'sane' Englishness that Jane represents. That Brontë could not think outside the imperial ideologies of the day is suggested by the fact that Jane inherits her wealth from her uncle John Eyre who ran a sugar plantation worked largely by slaves, without a word of protest on their behalf.

With colonialism ensuring the prosperity of the middle class, they increasingly debated what would constitute a feminine ideal and the so-called 'Woman Question' became one that preoccupied society. One response was to clearly delineate those behaviours appropriate for each sex. Social critic and art historian, John Ruskin produces sentiments typical of this approach when he wrote in 1865 that the, 'man's power is active, progressive, defensive. He is eminently the doer, the creator, the discoverer, the defender.' Women's power, he suggests, is 'not for invention or creation, but for sweet ordering, arrangement and decision. She sees the qualities of things, their claims and their places. Her great function

is Praise' (Ruskin 1865: 473). Clearly this definition disallows creative women writers and generally puts action outside of the realms of the feminine. Both Brontë and her protagonist chafe against such limitations, and *Jane Eyre* questions the desirability of a number of sanctioned female roles. Miss Temple, for example, can be seen as the forerunner of a figure immortalized in Coventry Patmore's celebrated poem 'The Angel in the House' (1856). Its idealized and domesticated portrait of Victorian womanhood entirely excludes the working-class and those genteel but poverty-stricken women who had to earn a living, like Brontë herself.

While the 'angel in the house' was one female figure who occupied the public imagination another was the governess. Emerging generally from the same social background as her employer, she questioned the boundaries of what it was to be middle class. Popular debate captured the ambivalence she generated: she was either discussed in terms similar to those used by the Ingrams in *Jane Eyre*, as a dullard, social climber and sexual predator or pointed to as in need of protection from overwork, the mental distress caused by the isolation of the role and lack of a pension. A 'Governesses Benevolent Institution' was established in the mid-1840s to help alleviate some of these problems, setting up saving accounts and creating places for governesses to stay between situations.

One final talking point of the day with which *Jane Eyre* engages concerns Christianity, an integral part of mid nineteenth-century English life although about half of Britain were non-conformists (Thomson 1950: 35). Questions of doubt are inseparable from those of faith and are reflected in Brontë's literary investigations into how to lead a fulfilling Christian life. With no consensus about the best way to worship God, debate was rife, of which Brontë, as the daughter of a clergyman, would have been well aware. Her father preached an evangelical brand of Protestantism which as Marianne Thormählen points out in *The Brontës and Religion* was a reaction against the showier elements of the church, teaching

## CONTEXTS

good deeds, social conscience and embracing the idea of salvation. Its more extreme proponents focused on the idea that the flesh must be mortified to save the soul, views represented in *Jane Eyre* by Brocklehurst who keeps damnation and death to the fore of his pupil's imagination.

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Biography</b>	<b>Historical Context</b>	<b>Literary Context</b>
1816	CB born at Thornton Yorkshire (21 April)		Austen – <i>Emma</i>
1817	Patrick Branwell born (26 June)	Seditious Meetings Bill	Scott – <i>Rob Roy</i>
1818	Emily born (30 July)	Steamer crosses Atlantic for first time	Austen – <i>Northanger Abbey</i> / <i>Persuasion</i> , Shelley – <i>Frankenstein</i>
1819		Birth of Princess Victoria	Byron – <i>Don Juan</i> , Scott – <i>Ivanhoe</i>
1820	Anne born (17 January). Family move to Haworth Parsonage	Death of King George III. George IV crowned	Shelley – <i>Prometheus Unbound</i>
1821	Maria (CB's mother) dies	Famine in Ireland (until 1823)	
1824	Four eldest sisters go to Cowan Bridge school		Hogg – <i>Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner</i>
1825	Maria and Elizabeth die. CB and Emily return home	Adams becomes US president	Scott – <i>The Talisman</i>
1829	CB begins to write her first Glass Town stories – part of the Angrian saga	Catholic Emancipation Act. Metropolitan police founded in London	
1831	CB goes to Roe Head school		
1832	CB leaves Roe Head		Bulwer Lytton – <i>Eugene Aram</i>

(Continued)

**BRONTË'S JANE EYRE**

(Continued)

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Biography</b>	<b>Historical Context</b>	<b>Literary Context</b>
1833	Ellen Nussey first visits Haworth	Slavery abolished throughout British Empire	
1834		Poor Law Amendment Act leads to establishment of workhouses	Bulwer Lytton – <i>Last Days of Pompeii</i>
1835	CB returns to Roe Head as a teacher		Wordsworth – <i>Yarrow Revisited and Other Poems</i>
1836		Chartist movement starts (calling for universal male suffrage)	Dickens – <i>Pickwick Papers</i> serialized (until 1837)
1837	Receives reply from Southey about her poetry	Accession of Victoria	Dickens – <i>Oliver Twist</i> serialized (until 1839)
1838	CB leaves Roe Head for good	‘People’s Charter’ issued by Chartists. Afghan war begins (ends 1842)	Dickens – <i>Nickleby</i> serialized (until 1839)
1839	CB declines marriage proposals from Nussey and Pryce. Governess to the Sidgewicks (10 weeks)	Opium wars between Britain and China (ends 1842)	
1840	Back to Haworth	Queen Victoria marries Prince Albert. Introduction of penny post	Poe – <i>Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque</i>
1841	Governess to the Whites (10 months)	Peel becomes prime minister. Tyler becomes US president	J Fenimore Cooper – <i>The Deerslayer</i>
1842	CB and Emily enrol at Mme. Heger’s school in Brussels	Mudie’s lending library opens in London	Browning – <i>Dramatic Lyrics</i>

(Continued)

**CONTEXTS**

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Biography</b>	<b>Historical Context</b>	<b>Literary Context</b>
1844	CB leaves Brussels and returns to Haworth	Royal commission on health in towns	Thackeray – <i>Barry Lyndon</i>
1846	<i>Poems by Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell</i> published. CB starts writing <i>Jane Eyre</i>	Corn laws repealed (allows expansion of free trade). Famine in Ireland.	
1847	<i>Jane Eyre</i> published	‘Ten Hours’ factory act (women and children not allowed to work for more than 10 hours per day). California gold rush	Emily Brontë – <i>Wuthering Heights</i> Anne Brontë – <i>Agnes Grey</i> . Thackeray – <i>Vanity Fair</i> serialized (until 1848)
1848	Branwell and Emily die	Sequence of European revolutions	Anne Brontë – <i>The Tenant of Wildfell Hall</i> . Gaskell – <i>Mary Barton</i>
1849	Anne dies. <i>Shirley</i> published	Bedford College for women opens to train governesses	Dickens – <i>David Copperfield</i> serialized (until 1850)
1850	CB meets Elizabeth Gaskell.	Marx and Engels – <i>The Communist Manifesto</i> published (commissioned 1848)	Hawthorne – <i>The Scarlet Letter</i> . Tennyson – ‘In Memoriam’
1851	CB declines marriage proposal from Taylor	The Great Exhibition at Crystal Palace (celebrating the empire)	Beecher Stowe – <i>Uncle Tom’s Cabin</i>
1853	<i>Villette</i> published		Dickens – <i>Bleak House</i>
1854	CB marries Reverend Nicholls	Crimean War begins (ends 1856)	Gaskell – <i>North and South</i> serialized. Patmore ‘The Angel in the House’
1855	CB dies (31 March)		

STUDY QUESTIONS FOR CHAPTER 1

1. Can you relate aspects of Brontë's life to *Jane Eyre*? How useful is knowledge of her biography when interpreting the novel? What are the disadvantages of such an approach?
2. What effect does it have on our understanding of Brontë that the letters to her conventional friend Ellen Nussey were used by Gaskell in writing her biography rather than her more radical letters to Mary Taylor?
3. Although Brontë never establishes an exact date for events in *Jane Eyre* it is generally thought to be set in the early 1800s. In what ways do wider nineteenth-century debates inform the concerns of the novel?

## CHAPTER 2

# LANGUAGE, STYLE AND FORM

### INTRODUCTION

Brontë's writing style in *Jane Eyre* works to compliment the novel's content as does its structure. The narrative could be summarized as about the story of Jane's trials and tribulations on her road to becoming Mrs Rochester and the book is structured to reflect Jane's journey as she progresses from place to place: Gateshead to Lowood, Thornfield, Moor-House and, finally, Ferndean. Like many of the names in the novel, including those of the characters, these place-names are symbolic; Gateshead is so-called because it acts as a barrier between Jane and the outer world. Thornfield, where she is forced to deal with the 'thorny' issues of Rochester's past and is tempted to martyr herself, lies at the centre of the narrative and approximately 40 per cent of the book is dedicated to it. The fact that she spends little over a year here, compared to the eight that she passes at Lowood, and yet devotes so much time to remembering it, emphasizes its pivotal role in her story.

Each home offers Jane both positive and negative experiences, teaching her something new either about society or herself as she encounters a variety of people and viewpoints that she either must embrace or reject. A pattern is established whereby she comes into conflict with authority (represented by Mrs Reed, Brocklehurst, Rochester and finally St John), defeats it through her inner strength and then escapes to forge new relationships and experiment with different roles. Accompanying each departure is a growing expectation about what life has to offer. She simply wants to escape from Gateshead, asks for a 'new servitude' after



Lowood, realizes that she can live by her own moral code at Thornfield and finally learns at Moor-House that she does not have to hide any part of herself to find acceptance.

One element worth emphasizing from the outset is the distinctiveness of Brontë's protagonist. As she wrote to the publisher of *Jane Eyre* in 1848, 'the standard hero[e]s and heroines of novels are personages in whom I could never . . . take an interest, believe to be natural, or wish to imitate: were I obliged to copy these characters I would simply – not write at all' (Barker 1997: 206). So her protagonist is both different from the conventional middle-class woman who might read the text, and also from the traditional literary portrayals of such a woman. Margot Peters, in *Charlotte Brontë: Style in the Novel*, helpfully uses the term 'perverse' to describe Brontë's conscious decision to create a different sort of heroine and sees 'perversity' as a hallmark of her style more generally. For example, as a result of Jane being an orphan and deprived of a place that felt like home she uses negative terms to describe things, focusing on what they are not, rather than what they are; when happy she describes herself as 'not unhappy'. This technique, demonstrates how the medium is inextricable from the message in this book.

Brontë's 'perverse' intention to engage with, and often contest, social and literary norms results in *Jane Eyre* being built around oppositions such as: the conventional and unconventional, duty and passion, impulse and conscience, freedom and entrapment. The narrator struggles to negotiate between these, traditionally antagonistic, dualisms, creating a sense of tension and drama in the novel. Brontë's use of antithesis is a technique that she even applies to the sentence. For example, Jane summarizes her feelings about school by stating: 'I would not now have exchanged Lowood with all its privations, for Gateshead and its daily luxuries' (139). Rushing to return to Thornfield, Jane says: 'To prolong doubt was to prolong hope' (523). Gesturing to the polarities of privation/luxury and doubt/hope draws attention not only

to the individual phrases but also to the novel's wider themes and Jane's battle to manoeuvre a middle path between extreme states of being.

### LANGUAGE AND STYLE

Brontë's language works to create a sense of excitement. Her heavy use of punctuation leads Doreen Roberts in 'The Warped System of Things' to suggest that Brontë's writing does not 'flow' but is like a 'sustained series of short explosions' (1997: 37). Despite the great length of many of the sentences in the novel, they are liberally punctuated with dashes and semicolons to produce surprisingly short and staccato units of sense. In terms of tone, there is very little middle ground; the narrator's response to circumstance is usually intense, and vividly penned in violent and emphatic language. Events and people that do not capture her imagination are condemned to relative silence, such as her relationships with Adèle and Mrs Fairfax. The novel moves in waves, with a dramatic scene that is important to either plot or character development followed by a pause consisting of a more mundane episode or Jane's reflections on earlier events. Even these retrospective musings, however, are dramatically depicted and overall the impassioned pitch of the narrative reflects the narrator's feelings that her first 20 years were perilous, bounded at one end by John Reed's 'violent tyrannies' and at the other by the psychological 'torture' meted out by St John Rivers.

Jane's sense of injustice, born from her days at Gateshead, saturates the story with courtroom idioms and a vocabulary of judgement and punishment. *Jane Eyre's* plot is built around legal issues connected to inheritance and marriage, and questions of justice, chastisement and retribution preoccupy the narrator, as does the tension between liberty and imprisonment. There are several extended passages that are framed as cross-examinations; when Jane first appears before Brocklehurst she is labelled the 'defendant' and later acts as 'judge' to Rochester's confessions about his past. When considering the likelihood that he prefers her to Blanche Ingram, she even puts her own

desires and character on trial in a section that starts with '[a]rraigned at my own bar . . .'. She proceeds by having 'Memory' and 'Reason' give evidence and ends with the judgement that 'a greater fool than Jane Eyre had never breathed the breath of life' (236–237).

No single lexical field dominates the text, and running alongside the language of the legal world is that of the spiritual and divine. The narrator alludes to biblical characters such as Adam and Eve, and Samson and Delilah, and peppers her tale with biblical quotations. As well as foregrounding the centrality of religion to the novel, these allusions stimulate the readers' previous associations and bring them to bear on the text. To take an obvious example, when the narrator calls the garden at Thornfield 'Eden-like' (332) she is indicating its great beauty, but also hinting at humankind's fall from grace, foreshadowing the tragedy that soon strikes Rochester and Jane's affair. Brontë would have expected her Bible-literate contemporaries to pick up on the many biblical citations and allusions scattered throughout the novel, although some might have gone unremarked because they are segued effortlessly into the text (on a couple of occasions they are not even signalled by quotation marks). This technique, whereby the boundary is blurred between the narrator's own words and those of the bible, shocked some of her peers especially when Christian imagery was used to represent her barely suppressed erotic feelings for Rochester.

Other texts that Brontë mentions by name include Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740), and Samuel Johnson's *The History of Rasselas* (1759). She also alludes to fairy tales and weaves in lines from work by Shakespeare, Milton and Byron. Unusually for the period, Brontë's father had allowed his daughters relatively uncensored access to his library, helping to explain the wide variety of genres that inform their writing. Readers acquainted with the texts Brontë mentions possess extra contexts with which to interpret *Jane Eyre*; those familiar with Richardson's *Pamela*, for example, about a servant who marries her once-way

ward master, might guess at Jane's eventual reunion with Rochester.

*Jane Eyre's* intertextuality can be read as part of Brontë's self-consciously literate style, as can its decidedly lyrical tone which is fitting for a text preoccupied with the protagonist's inner life and written by a published poet. It has even been suggested that this is the first British novel in which an author extensively attempts to combine poetry and prose (Peters 1973: 162). Brontë certainly uses stylistic devices that are commonly associated with poetry, including unusual syntactical structures where sentences are inverted. Jane describes, for instance, how Mrs Reed stops her sitting with her cousins by saying, '[m]e, she had dispensed from joining the group'. By placing 'me' at the start of the sentence the narrator stresses the effect this action had on her, demonstrating how Brontë uses inversion to add emphasis and startle the reader into paying attention. Her widespread use of these atypical sentences, where the syntax (word order) is patterned in an unusual way, produces an, often unconscious, disquiet in the reader which mirrors the tension that exists in both the narrator's inner and outer life. Figurative language, including the use of metaphor and personification, also permeates the text and adds a poetic air to the novel. For example, after Jane leaves Thornfield and has been deposited by the carriage on the moor, she personifies 'Nature' as the 'universal mother' and describes herself falling asleep 'nestled to the breast of the hill', conjuring an image of her as an infant protected by the maternal body (416).

Descriptions of the natural world reveal Jane's feelings to the reader as external conditions in *Jane Eyre* match the protagonist's interior state. Virginia Woolf succinctly explains this technique, writing that both Charlotte's and her sister Emily's 'storms, their moors, their lovely spaces of summer weather are not ornaments applied to decorate a dull page or display the writer's power of observation – they carry on the emotion and light up the meaning of the book' (Woolf 1925: 201). For example, at the start of the novel the wintry

storm not only prevents the Reeds from taking a walk and leads Jane into conflict with her cousin, but also reveals to the reader her unsettled state of mind. The display of feelings, rather than just their description, reflects Brontë's attempts to represent an individual's inner life and this psychological realism has been the most consistently praised aspect of the novel.

David Lodge, in 'Fire and Eyre: Charlotte Brontë's War of Earthly Elements' suggests that much of the natural imagery in the novel refers to the elements, and fire in particular attracts 'a very significant cluster of emotions and values' (1970: 117). Readers are offered descriptions of domestic hearths, symbolizing home and comfort, but also the inferno that destroys Thornfield, kills Bertha and maims Rochester, representative of the incandescent depths of rage. In line with *Jane Eyre's* sustained reliance on oppositions fire symbolism is often paired with images based around water or ice. These elements are set against each other in descriptions of spaces, for instance the red-room's crimson walls contrast with the bed's snowy white counterpanes. In terms of characters, Brontë creates Rochester as the fiery and passionate protagonist in competition for Jane with St John and his icy calm. Entire scenes are also built around the opposition between fire and water, for example, the cool side of Jane's personality helps her to literally quench the fire set by Rochester's 'old-flame' Bertha. Scenarios and images like these amplify the sense of conflict that underpins the text, and gesture to the extremes of Jane's personality; for a large part of her psychological journey is concerned with attempting to balance icy indifference and duty with a burning passion and rage that would destroy her if too fully indulged.

Natural objects, such as bird and trees, are endowed with symbolic significance in the novel but it is the moon, which appears at Jane's many crisis points, that dominates in this context. It is almost a character in its own right, providing Jane with an ally and inspiration throughout her travels,

isolated as she often is from human companionship (Heilman 1960: 285). Traditionally the moon is associated with the spiritual, feminine and the irrational, associations upon which Brontë draws extensively. The fact that the moon acts, on occasions, as a mother substitute is made most explicit when 'she' saves Jane from becoming Rochester's mistress: 'She broke forth as moon never yet burst from cloud . . . then, not a moon, but a white human form shone in the azure' warning "My daughter, flee temptation!", to which she responds "Mother, I will" (411).

### NARRATIVE VOICE

Obviously there are differences between Jane, the 30-year-old narrator who retrospectively depicts events, and the character who participates in them. The gap between these two 'Janes' is most apparent when the adult narrator interprets events from a perspective too mature for her younger self, as when she looks back upon her relationship with the Reeds and says: 'I know that had I been a sanguine, brilliant, careless, handsome, romping child – though equally dependent and friendless – Mrs Reed would have endured my presence more complacently' (73). As a child she would have been unable to make this reading of the situation which leads critics to discuss *Jane Eyre* as possessing a double 'I'. One refers to the mature person telling the story, while the other 'I' refers variously to a child, adolescent and then a young woman.

Although it is largely the narrator who provides us with insights into her personality, every character proffers some kind of opinion of Jane (down to the landlord of the Rochester's Arms). Generally, she is regarded as increasingly placid the older she gets; she is judged a 'mad-cat' at Gateshead (69) but by the time she reaches Moor-House St John describes her as 'docile', 'diligent' and 'disinterested' (502). However, this picture of Jane is one shared by neither her soul mate Rochester nor the reader, a disparity addressed by Lisa Sternlieb, in her essay 'Hazarding Confidences'. She points

to Lowood as the place where Jane begins to censor herself in front of other characters; toning down the story of childhood abuse and hiding her anger so that her tale becomes more believable. In the following extract Jane talks about modifying her storytelling style:

Exhausted by emotion, my language was more subdued than it generally was when it developed that sad theme [her time at Gateshead]; and mindful of Helen's warnings against the indulgence of resentment, I infused into the narrative far less gall and wormwood than ordinary. Thus restrained and simplified, it sounded more credible: I felt as I went on that Miss Temple fully believed me. (135)

That she increasingly reins in her interior dramas is starkly illustrated by the fact that, despite the closeness she feels to her cousins Diana and Mary, their 'perfect congeniality of tastes, sentiments, and principles', she never fully shares her past with them when resident at Moor-House (444). So, while they see Jane as composed, the reader knows that this is only half the story.

We regard the narrator as passionate and imaginative, independent and indomitable because we are privy to her private obsessions. Terry Eagleton in *Myths of Power* captures the essence of this divided self when he describes Brontë's protagonists as 'an extraordinarily contradictory amalgam of smouldering rebelliousness and prim conventionalism, gushing Romantic fantasy and canny hard-headedness, quivering sensitivity and blunt rationality' (16). In the case of *Jane Eyre*, he explains this duality as a result of Jane being a governess which necessarily encouraged a 'splitting of self'; on the one hand she needed to be 'cultivated' and of a certain class to occupy the role, on the other she was forced to behave as a servant.

Our knowledge of Jane's inner turmoil has led readers to conclude that she offers an unflinchingly truthful autobiography. Doreen Roberts describes the narrator as 'unfailingly honest', producing a 'warts and all portrait' (Roberts 1997: 50).

Yet, the disparity between her private and public self could suggest otherwise. Most recently, Sternlieb argues that the narrator keeps secrets from the reader as well as other characters; she certainly does not say where she is writing this account and for whom. These types of questions are raised by first-person narrators because we are forced to think about why they might be telling their story and the extent to which their account is supposedly sincere. Although Brontë's creation is usually viewed as reliable, it is interesting to consider her in a different light.

Brontë certainly reminds us throughout the narrative that the narrator is crafting a story and carefully constructing a portrait, as demonstrated in the following extract:

Hitherto I have recorded in detail the events of my insignificant existence . . . but this is not to be a regular autobiography: I am bound to invoke memory where I know her response will possess some degree of interest; therefore I now pass a space of eight years almost in silence. (149)

The self-effacing 'my insignificant existence' is disingenuous as simply by writing an autobiography the individual presumes their life is significant, and so the narrator here is encouraging the reader to find her modest and likeable. Autobiographical writing, a genre with which *Jane Eyre* allies itself on its title page, necessarily involves such manoeuvres, as pulling a life together into a coherent narrative involves a process of selection and omission. It would be a different book if the narrator had, for instance chosen to say more about those eight years at Lowood, perhaps less of a meditation on passion and self-fulfilment and more concerned with, say, the education of women or female friendship.

Alongside these more subtle attempts at manipulation are the narrator's direct addresses to the reader, a technique Brontë uses some thirty times. Jane possesses a particularly insistent and persuasive voice that draws us into the story. She speaks to us progressively more frequently, ingeniously



increasing our perception that we are her confidante. Towards the end of the novel, she suggests that we have grown to understand her fully (and if we have not then the fault is ours): 'And, reader, do you think I feared him in his blind ferocity? – if you do, you little know me' (532). As to the function of these asides, perhaps Brontë is so aware of the singularity of her protagonist that she feels bound to try to convince readers that, however unlikely, the events she depicts are within the realms of the real. Maybe she does not want her character misunderstood as at times the narrator corrects our opinions, making sure we are reading her in the 'right' way: 'Perhaps you think I had forgotten Mr Rochester, reader, amidst these changes of place and fortune? Not for a moment' (497). We are privy to the pain Jane experiences when her character is read incorrectly, whether by Mrs Reed or Brocklehurst, and so it is understandable that she wants to control her own story, stress what is important to her, and define her own life.

## GENRE

### Realism vs. Romance

Before discussing Brontë's engagement with popular genres of the day, it is important to consider the two broader types of writing that interweave throughout the text, the romantic and the realistic. The romantic, concerned with life's more extraordinary moments, including the passionate, is represented by Jane and Rochester's relationship, which for many readers is the novel's most memorable element. Their bond can be explained as a version of the Freudian oedipal triangle. Jane desires the much older, symbolic father figure Rochester who she cannot marry until the mother-figure, Bertha, is destroyed. Brontë adapts this basic paradigm and in doing so is actually credited with creating, or at least popularizing, a certain type of romance with a brooding hero and a resourceful heroine that remains popular today. Yet even as she refers to, or introduces, romantic conventions,

she also undermines them. Rochester is the now-stereotypical tall, dark, rugged stranger but having to be rescued by Jane on their first meeting, turns upside-down our preconceptions about the identity of the rescuer in such narratives. *Jane Eyre* also owes much to the Romantics, with a capital 'R'. This label is applied to a diverse group of late eighteenth-century and early-nineteenth-century writers who rebelled against order and adherence to rules. Instead they valorized strong feelings and the importance of the individual.

Although Brontë was captivated by the works of the Romantics such as Byron, she does not totally disregard convention in her own writing and retains a healthy respect for some conventional beliefs, such as the sanctity of marriage. Passion is bridled to morality as Brontë attempts to include it in the realm of the everyday. So the novel can also be said to take a realist stance, presenting the domestic and the ordinary. Certainly the anxieties and hopes that Jane expresses are not just to do with the wildly romantic or sinister. For instance, the extraordinary figure of Bertha threatens Jane's equilibrium but before that so too did the humdrum nature of life at Lowood. Equally, while she wants a relationship with the Byronic Rochester, she is also happy to spend time studying with her cousins Diana and Mary. There has been much critical debate about the favoured mode of the novel although many readers are now content to appreciate its polyphonic and multi-layered quality without feeling the need to decide.

As well as melding romance and realism, the novel also gestures to a diverse variety of genres. Sometimes the dialogue between them is harmonious, for example the Gothic and the fairy tale share many of the same concerns and the *Bildungsroman* and spiritual autobiography are connected though the trope of a personal journey. However, at times the generic strands clash. The spiritual biography seems at odds with the romance plot, replicating the tension that underwrites the novel as a whole. What follows is a brief discussion of these genres, and others, that have influenced Brontë's writing.

### Fairy tale

Beginning with Brontë's allusions to fairy tales is appropriate as they are some of the earliest stories readers encounter. Although they have been sanitized in more contemporary versions, fairy tales are traditionally full of dangers and horrors, often set in domestic spaces and dealing with absent mothers, fatally careless fathers and murderous husbands. From the start Jane is positioned as a Cinderella figure whose true worth and natural goodness is recognized by her dashing prince and rewarded, once she has escaped the clutches of Mrs Reed, the ugly stepmother figure. There is an allusion to Red Riding Hood when the fearsome Mr Brocklehurst is likened to the wolf, and Thornfield is described as a Bluebeard's castle. A psychological reading of fairy tales suggests that they enact certain basic anxieties that individuals commonly experience, helping us to work through our fears, which explains their enduring appeal. For example, the original story of Bluebeard captures the terror and attraction of the marriage bed. For the narrator to position Rochester as Bluebeard suggests both a recognition of, and nervousness about, her sexuality, as well as the more obvious suggestion that he has an ill-treated wife hidden away somewhere. All of these fairy tales to which Brontë gestures centre around a threatened heroine who ingeniously finds a way to negotiate a variety of problems, a synopsis that could easily describe *Jane Eyre*.

### Gothic

Gothic literature often refers to the fairy tale and shares its interest in exploring humanity's terrors and desires. It emerged as a genre in Britain in the late eighteenth century and was inaugurated by novels such as Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Story* (1765) and Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794). *Jane Eyre* contains Gothic settings, for instance, the sinister house and lonely moonlit moors, and plays with Gothic tropes, such as the incarcerated and mad wife. Bertha is actually described at one point as a 'vampyre', a figure popularized

by John Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1819) (originally thought to be by Byron of whom Brontë was a fan).

What unites many Gothic novels is their concern with transgression and the disintegration of boundaries, which are key features of *Jane Eyre*. Most obviously Brontë collapses the barrier between master and servant, causing great anxiety in characters from either end of the social spectrum, from Mrs Fairfax through to the Ingrams. Jane also crosses the gender divide by exhibiting stereotypically masculine traits such as desire and independence. In terms of style, the uncanny is an effect created when the borderline between the familiar and unfamiliar is troubled and is a technique of which Brontë makes good use in the text. For example, when exploring the third storey Jane hears what should be a familiar sound of laughter, but because she believes it comes from the mysterious Grace Poole it produces an uncanny feeling and arouses her curiosity.

A further sign of a Gothic narrative is the presence of a double and Jane is famously haunted by Bertha. In psychoanalytical terms, the *doppelgänger* (double) illustrates the concept that the individual possesses a conscious and unconscious. Brontë captures the troubling sense of split identity as Jane is dogged by Bertha who expresses the protagonist's repressed anger and sexuality. That Jane is not fully in control of her feelings is suggested even before the appearance of Bertha, when the narrator describes her thoughts as if they came to her from outside. Overhearing Mrs Reed tell her children that she was 'not fit to associate with them', Jane's 'scarcely voluntary' response is to demand 'What would Uncle Reed say to you if he were alive?' She explains: 'I say scarcely voluntary, for it seemed as if my tongue pronounced words without my will consenting to their utterance: something spoke out of me over which I had no control.' (86) Brontë here captures the sense of the unconscious, fifty or so years before Freud theorizes its existence. She shows a character buffeted by external and internal forces, often the fate of the Gothic heroine but Jane differs

from many of them insofar as she arguably masters both by the finish of the novel.

### Social Comment Novels

Around the time of *Jane Eyre*'s publication, mid-Victorian England was involved in a great deal of discussion about social reform. For instance, a group called the Chartists published a 'People's Charter' in 1838 calling for universal male suffrage and Karl Marx and Frederick Engels completed the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1850) in which they urged the working class to seize power. A number of texts known as the 'Condition of England' novels engaged creatively with social and political change including Charles Dickens' *Dombey and Son* (1846–1848), Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848) and Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848). Although Brontë wrote to her publisher in 1852, 'I cannot write books handling the topics of the day; it is no use trying' (see Tillotson 1954: 115), in *Jane Eyre* she undoubtedly explores a variety of contemporary issues; such as the abuse of children and the role of the established church in Christian faith. Furthermore while the focus of the text is undeniably on Jane's interior life and personal battles, the barriers she faces were shared by many real-life women who also railed against the narrow choices offered to them by society. Brontë's use of a forceful first-person narrator additionally pressures readers who are not of the same class or gender as Jane to experience a variety of oppressive situations alongside her, adding to the novel's sense of social critique. One reviewer talks about the bond that is established between character and reader when he explains that his family: 'identified ourselves with Jane in all our troubles', adding comically 'and finally married Mr. Rochester about four in the morning' (see Alexander 2006: 135).

### The Governess Novel

The plight of the governess was close to Brontë's heart as she and all her siblings were, at one time or another, private tutors,

an experience none of them appeared to enjoy. The governess destabilized class and gender boundaries insofar as she was a middle-class woman who worked at a time when married women from the same class were becoming increasingly ‘ornamental’, thanks to people such as the governess being paid to take over their tasks. Sympathetic novels such as *The Governess* (1835) by Mrs Sherwood or Rachael McCrindell’s *The English Governess* (1844) examined the anxieties and difficulties of the role as does *Jane Eyre* with its nod to both the tedium of the post and the dangers of exploitation that came with it. Brontë also captures the ambiguity of the position whereby individuals were employed because of their cultivation and sensibility but were expected to show a subservience that many felt demeaning (Eagleton 1975:16).

### ***Bildungsroman***

*Bildungsroman* is a term that describes a novel of ‘formation’, with a plot that explores an individual’s progress towards maturity, often against the odds. Dickens’ *David Copperfield* (1850) and *Great Expectations* (1861) are examples of the genre, and as they suggest, it is widely associated with male rather than female protagonists. Yet *Jane Eyre* broadly shares their trajectory. While it arguably finishes on a conformist note, with the romance-plot generally seen as female overriding the vocational one of Jane as professional teacher and scholar, Penny Bouhelma reminds us that it is just ‘one narrative moment’ and readers have been offered plenty of other moments that represent less stereotypically female ways of being (74). Jane’s education, in the broadest sense, leads her to realize her place in the world even if for some readers it is not where they would like her to be.

Controversially some critics, such as Sally Shuttleworth, disagree with this analysis and argue that although Jane appears to mature she actually changes very little over the course of the story: ‘The history she offers is that of a series of moments of conflict, a series, moreover, which does not display the characteristics of progression, but rather the endless reiteration of

the same' (Shuttleworth 1996: 159). Obviously it is impossible to measure definitively the extent of Jane's development, even more so because with any first-person narrator the question is raised about how much of what they tell us we can believe.

### Spiritual Autobiography

The spiritual autobiography is also from a genre that charts a protagonist's progress but in terms of the moral and spiritual rather than the vocational, the most famous example of which is John Bunyan's religious allegory *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1684). At the time when Brontë was writing it was widely read and tells the story of Christian as he journeys on a pilgrimage through such figuratively entitled places as the Slough of Despond. Therefore, the first readers of *Jane Eyre* would have been used to narratives where a soul was in peril and found Jane's use of biblical models to frame her experience quite usual. However, they would not have expected the clash between the religious and romantic narratives, between Christian duty and human passion, neither of which is allowed to be the clear victor. It is by using such contrasts at the level of language, imagery and genre that Brontë encapsulates the conflicts faced by an orphan making her way in the world as we will find time and again in the critical analysis of the novel carried out in the following chapter.

### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. *Jane Eyre* is a first a first-person narrative. What are the advantages and disadvantages of this narrative technique? How reliable is the narrator? Do you trust what she tells you?
2. The narrator addresses the reader throughout the novel. Do you think the reader whom the narrator addresses is male or female? Does it make a difference?
3. Brontë uses a great deal of symbolism from the natural world in her work. Explore further how either fire, the moon, birds or trees are developed as symbols in the novel.

#### LANGUAGE, STYLE AND FORM

4. Choose one of the genres mentioned above and consider the extent to which Bronte borrows from it in *Jane Eyre*
5. Nineteenth-century thought was structured around binary oppositions, such as passion/reason, with one of the pair assigned a higher moral or social value. Make a list of those that you can find in the novel and explore them by answering the following questions: on which one of the pair does Bronte appear to place more value? Would this be the same as wider Victorian society?



*This page intentionally left blank*

## CHAPTER 3

# READING *JANE EYRE*

### INTRODUCTION

Before analysing the novel itself, it is worth pausing to consider its title. By naming the text after the narrator Brontë indicates from the outset that the story is organized around Jane and her experiences. As Brontë often chooses symbolic names for her characters and the places they visit it is useful to consider the connotations of ‘Eyre’. Phonetically it sounds similar to both ‘heir’ and ‘air’, pointing to Jane’s position as an inheritor of family wealth and also to the less grounded side of her nature. It is reminiscent of the word ‘ire’, which recurs throughout the novel and directs us to Jane’s underlying anger at the limited opportunities with which she is faced for much of her young adulthood.

This chapter is divided into sections that reflect the five locations that mark the stages of Jane’s life: Gateshead, Lowood, Thornfield, Moor-House and Ferndean. In each section I discuss the key scenes that take place at that location and point out the critical issues that surround them.

### GATESHEAD (CHAPTERS 1–4)

Instead of the systematic scene setting that the reader might expect from a nineteenth-century novel, *Jane Eyre* immediately draws us into the world of the ten-year-old narrator with the statement, ‘There was no possibility of taking a walk that day.’ Brontë structures the first chapter around a few carefully chosen scenes that present a poignant picture of

Jane's childhood at Gateshead and reveals much about her status in this description of her feelings:

I never liked long walks, especially on chilly afternoons; dreadful to me was the coming home in the raw twilight, with nipped fingers and toes, and a heart saddened by the chidings of Bessie, the nurse, and humbled by the consciousness of my physical inferiority to Eliza, John, and Georgiana Reed. (63)

The narrator recollects the physical discomfort of the walks and, more damagingly, her emotional distress at Bessie's attempts to make her behave correctly. Throughout this opening section, Jane is constantly compared with her cousins. Mrs Reed and Bessie mention the deficiencies of her 'disposition', the fact that it is not 'sociable' or 'attractive' or even suitably 'childlike' (63). Whereas the Reed children are robust and handsome, Jane is frail and unprepossessing, features to which Brontë returns throughout the novel and part of a conscious decision to produce a female character that differed from the usual type. Explaining this strategy to her sisters, she questioned their automatic portrayal of protagonists as beautiful, adding that she intended to create 'a heroine as plain and small as myself who shall be as interesting as any of yours' (Gaskell 1857: 247).

Jane also continually measures herself against other characters and as she gets older she comes to believe her own self-worth, demonstrating a lack of humility that some contemporary reviewers of the novel found disturbing. The private integrity that lies beneath the stoic façade are already here though for the careful reader to note in Jane's initial comparison with her cousins, as it is only a sense of physical inferiority to which she admits rather than any sort of moral or intellectual shortcoming. Her pride at being different from the Reeds is even more obvious in chapter 2 when she mulls over why she was treated as an outcast. Although a mystery to her younger self, she explains that as an adult 'I see it

clearly', realizing that 'I was like nobody there' and adding defiantly 'If they did not love me, in fact, as little did I love them' (73). Typically, she defines herself by pointing to what she was not, one of the shallow and cosseted Reeds. Refusing to be a victim, she claims her marginal position as a source of empowerment, her 'germs of indignation' cancelling out the 'contempt of their judgement' (73). This is one of the first places where Brontë reminds the reader that the 'I' of the narrative voice and that of the younger Jane are different. Here the 'I' of the adult narrator who 'sees things clearly' makes a sophisticated reading of events that the younger 'I' was unable to understand and articulate.

The opening pages introduce many of the stylistic elements that are hallmarks of Brontë's writing, such as the inverted sentence, 'dreadful to me was coming home', and the use of negatives to set the scene. These trademark techniques grab our attention from the start and signal to the reader that the narrator and her tale are not going to be ordinary. We also have the first instance of Brontë describing something in the exterior world in order to reflect Jane's feelings with the icy conditions outside the window mirroring the narrator's sense of chilling emotional alienation. Similarly, when Jane hides away to read Bewick's *History of British Birds* (1797), Brontë writes in some detail about the wild and desolate scenes that populate the book. The images that Jane finds 'profoundly interesting' such as the 'broken boat stranded on a desolate coast' or 'the rock standing up alone in a sea of billow and spray' emphasize her sense of isolation and also hint at her ambivalence towards the wider world, capturing both her curiosity and nervousness about what lies beyond Gateshead's walls. (65)

As her interest in Bewick's guide suggests, books allow Jane a form of escape and set her imagination free even as her body is confined. In this sense, stories are dangerous as they potentially offer freedoms and experiences deemed unsuitable for a child. Brontë emphasizes the subversive power of texts as it is Jane reading that proves the catalyst for John's indignation. The scene in which they fight is one of

the turning points of the narrator's life as suggested by the fact that the 'autobiography' starts by detailing the events that lead up to it. John abuses Jane's orphan status, adding to the reader's knowledge about the protagonist's past and betraying him as a self-important bully: 'You have no business to take our books: you are a dependent mama says; you have no money; your father left you none; you ought to beg, and not to live here with gentlemen's children like us' (67). He is the first of the many patriarchs who tries to quell the narrator and define her experience. He is also the first of them to fail as even at this young age Jane refuses his vision of her as humble dependent, instigating a story of rebellion that weaves throughout the narrative.

Unleashing some of the 'ire' that dwells beneath her deceptively calm surface, she returns his taunts, labelling him a 'wicked and cruel boy' and a 'murderer' and then attacks him physically. Inappropriate though her actions may be, for a modern reader at least, her response to a bullying oppressor seems normal and even just. Not so for the other inhabitants of Gateshead who describe her as a 'mad cat' (69).

Jane's behaviour and subsequent incarceration anticipate the fate of another character in the novel unable to control her passions, Bertha, who is also described in animalistic terms and read as Jane's wild alter ego. The red-room foreshadows both Bertha's incarceration in Thornfield's third storey and the narrator's later, more psychological imprisonment; Jane, for example, recalls the red-room when about to leave Thornfield, clearly signalling her sense of entrapment.

Brontë's description of the room works at a literal level, helping the reader to imagine the spaces Jane inhabits and adding realism to the text, and on a more figurative one as it reflects the character's interior state. Decorated claustrophobically in fiery shades with a red carpet and 'crimson cloth' covering the bed, the red-room mirrors Jane's acute anger at the injustice of her punishment. In contrast, the bed's white pillows and 'snowy' counterpane suggest the coldness of restraint and her increasingly frozen feelings (71).

Taken together, the account of the decor is part of the oppositional fire and water/ice imagery that unites the text, symbolically representing the extremes of temperament between which Jane swings. When the narrator enters the room ‘my blood was still warm; the mood of the revolted slave was still bracing me with its bitter vigour’ (72). As the light fades, her feelings cool and she states; ‘I grew by degrees cold as a stone, and then my courage sank. My habitual mood of humiliation, self-doubt, forlorn depression, fell damp on the embers of my decaying ire’ (73). Part of the narrator’s odyssey towards self-fulfilment involves learning to negotiate between the iciness of self-doubt and the fieriness of her rage. Brontë suggests that neither of these extreme states does Jane any good; even her warm ‘blood’ brings only ‘bitter vigour’ rather than contentment or even change for the better.

Elaine Showalter, in *A Literature of Their Own*, suggests that the red-room is symbolic of female inner space, offering a Freudian reading of its ‘secret drawers’ and ‘its jewel casket’ (71). Within this context the red-room scene captures a female rite of passage, symbolizing the menarche and Jane’s onset of puberty. Here she moves from being a child to a woman with an enforced awareness of her body and its supposed unruliness, as well as becoming someone who needs to start making her own way in the world.

Although Brontë nominally begins the novel in a realist fashion, the red-room incident brings the Gothic element of the text to the fore, a strand subtly introduced in the description of *The History of British Birds*’ eerie illustrations. A heroine incarcerated in a room by a dastardly villain is a common motif in Gothic fiction, and creating a sense of uncanniness is one of the genre’s favoured strategies. Brontë exploits this in Jane’s failure to recognize herself in the mirror as the daylight begins to fade:

the strange little figure there gazing at me, with a white face and arms specking the gloom and glittering eyes of

fear, moving where all else was still had the effect of a real spirit: I thought it like one of the tiny spirits half fairy, half imp, Bessie's evening stories represented as coming up out of lone, ferny dells in moors. (71)

The blurring of the boundary between self and other, the familiar and unfamiliar, creates an uncanny effect as Jane's reflection is transformed into something strange and other-worldly, belonging to the supernatural rather than the more 'civilised' world of humans. At different points in *Jane Eyre*, the narrator reveals her thoughts about herself by describing her reflection. With this in mind, the repetition of the word 'spirit' suggests that Jane feels different from everyone else at Gateshead, insubstantial and marginalized.

In her heightened state of emotion where the supernatural takes precedence over the real, Jane reads a glimmering light on the wall as the ghost of her dead uncle inducing what her adult voice calmly states was 'a species of fit', adding; 'unconsciousness closed the scene' (75). The narrator here 'solves' her predicament by slipping into a type of temporary madness and fainting. Previously she had considered other dramatic ways of escaping her 'insupportable oppression' at Gateshead by 'running away, or, if that is not to be afforded, never eating or drinking more, and letting myself die' (72). Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's interpretation of this scene, from *The Madwoman in the Attic*, provides a useful gloss on Jane's plans:

Escape through flight, or escape through starvation: the alternatives will recur throughout *Jane Eyre* and, indeed, throughout much other nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature by women. In the red-room . . . little Jane chooses (or is chosen) by a third, even more terrifying alternative; escape through madness. (1986: 67–68)

When finally allowed out of the red-room there is a typical lull in the narrative while Jane recovers from her temporary

derangement and the ordeal that had an effect on her nerves 'of which I feel the reverberation to this day' (77). Her 'cherished volume' of Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) fails to cheer her up as she now sees Gulliver as a 'desolate wanderer in most dread and dangerous regions', mirroring her own feelings about her position among the Reeds. Equally, she identifies with the 'long journey' of the 'poor orphan-child' among 'hard-hearted' men in the ballad Bessie mistakenly sings in an effort to soothe her (79).

As a result of the red-room incident, the kindly doctor Mr Lloyd, calling to check on Jane, advises Mrs Reed to send her niece to school and she is summoned to an interview with Lowood's headmaster, Mr Brocklehurst. He is described as possessing 'two inquisitive-looking grey eyes which twinkled under bushy brows', and when Jane gets closer she thinks, 'What a face he had . . . what a great nose! And what a mouth! And what large prominent teeth!' (91) It takes little imagination to read him as the wolf from the fairy tale of Little Red Riding Hood. Not only does this comparison capture the threat he poses to Jane but also suggests he is covering up his true intentions; just as the wolf masquerades as a benign grandmother, Brocklehurst pretends to be the compassionate head of a Christian institution. Mrs Reed may believe the facade but readers gradually learn that the child's-eye view and fairy tale comparison to the 'big bad' wolf was telling. His description as a 'black pillar' with a 'grim face' like a 'carved mask' compounds his threatening presence and points to him as the human embodiment of a 'pillar' of patriarchal society; his duty is to make sure his young charges grow into a docile womanhood (90).

Brontë captures his authoritative status by using the language of the courtroom to describe the scene. Brocklehurst acts as 'interrogator' questioning Jane intensely and judging her replies. In response to his enquiry about what she should do to avoid hell, she replies 'I must keep in good health, and not die' (91). Not only does this suggest a childish naivety but also a keen and pragmatic sense of self-preservation that



remains strong throughout the story. It is Jane's refusal to sacrifice herself which later prevents her either becoming a martyr for spiritual fervour at Lowood, like Helen Burns, or agreeing to go to India with St John. Jane's response also demonstrates the more satiric side of Brontë's mind as it mocks the idea that a good reason for living a Christian life is the risk of hell-fire, rather than being an end in itself.

After Brocklehurst's departure, it is Jane's turn to judge as she realizes that Mrs Reed has blighted her future by labelling her a liar: 'I am not deceitful: if I were I would say I loved *you*: but I declare, I do not love you.' Adding that people 'think you are a good woman, but you are bad, hard-hearted, *you* are the liar' (96). Many readers applaud Jane's stand against hypocrisy and tyranny and revel in Mrs Reed's shock. For the narrator it is not as straightforward; her 'victory' is short-lived and to capture her feelings she likens her mind to a 'black and blasted' heath, once the 'devouring' flames of anger have passed (97). This scene reveals that her temper, when indulged unrestrainedly, is consumptive and corrosive. It also shows her capacity for intense emotions later reflected in her ability to experience passionate love. Brontë reminds the reader of this gentler aspect of Jane's nature by finishing the Gateshead section with a scene in which she and Bessie spend a peaceful afternoon together. While unable to free Jane from the red-room, Bessie does adopt the maternal duties allowed by her position as servant. An embrace between the pair prompts Jane to declare 'Even for me life had its gleams of sunshine' (99). Yet the use of the phrase 'even' reminds the reader of the rarity of such occasions and instead of a 'ray' of sunshine there is only the more cautious 'gleam'.

#### LOWOOD (CHAPTERS 5–10)

The Lowood chapters open with Jane readying herself for her departure from Gateshead on the '19<sup>th</sup> of January'. Brontë's use of a specific date adds an air of realism in line with the fact that the narrative temporarily abandons its Gothic and

romantic strands to concentrate on more realist concerns. Alongside the continuing tale of Jane's development, Brontë focuses on the domestic and the day-to-day life of the school and in doing so offers a social commentary on the education of women and religious hypocrisy.

It is left to Bessie to wave Jane off although another pseudo-maternal presence makes a brief appearance to mark her departure as rays from the 'half-moon just setting' stream through the window and onto her bed (100). Despite the fact that Gateshead is only 50 miles from Lowood, in the early nineteenth century it took a day to cover the distance by coach. The adult narrator captures the epic nature of the journey in psychological terms when she explains that 'the day seemed to me of preternatural length, and we appeared to travel over hundreds of miles of road' (101). Jane feels she is 'severed' from Gateshead and her childhood. Stopping at an inn she says: 'I walked about for a long time, feeling very strange and mortally apprehensive of someone coming in and kidnapping me' (101). Framing her experience in story-book terms, she greets this longed-for psychic and physical move with the mix of excitement and dread that characterizes many of the experiences in her autobiography.

Brontë captures the protagonist's internal tumult by explaining how 'Rain, wind and darkness' hampers Jane's first glimpse of Lowood. Through this storm she can only see the building 'dimly' reflecting her incomprehension about what to expect from the institution (102). The narrator is not kept in the dark long about those sort of place to which she has been sent and shares this information with the reader by detailing a complete day at the school. It is an unflattering portrait as Brontë based Lowood on the school at which her two older sisters fatally developed tuberculosis, and where she spent a number of miserable months.

What the narrator quickly learns is that 'the indefatigable bell' (105) divides the girls' lives up into a strict rota of lessons and Bible study. They are turned outside in the middle of the day, which, as it is winter when Jane arrives, proves an

unpleasant experience. The 'drizzling yellow fog' falls on the garden that is described in terms of it being a prison-yard 'with walls so high as to exclude every glimpse of a prospect'. It is a dreary and dank place where 'the sundry pale and thin ones herded together for shelter' and 'the dense mist penetrated to their shivering frames' (109). Treated like animals, they huddle together like cattle and the frequent 'sound of a hollow cough' suggests that the institution's neglect is making the girls ill. They have little to eat and what they do is rank. Jane's first breakfast is burnt porridge which is 'a nauseous mess', hinting at the disregard with which the girl's basic needs are held (106). Lowood is also psychologically hard on its pupils, offering little comfort and a limited opportunity for privacy as even at night they sleep in a communal dormitory with two to each bed. Discipline is strict and the most favoured form of punishment is public humiliation, strengthening the theme of trial and punishment that pervades the novel. Brontë details daily life in order to highlight the abuses that happen in this supposedly Christian and benevolent institution and condemns it in doing so.

The narrator soon introduces the two protagonists who come to mean the most to her at Lowood: its superintendent Miss Temple and fellow pupil Helen Burns. Based on Brontë's older sister Maria, Helen, as her surname signals, burns with a religious fervour, accepting the doctrine that this life is simply a poor precursor to the next. Jane finds the courage to strike up conversation with her on the first day and Brontë neatly captures the differences between the two girls when she describes their reactions to Helen's punishment for untidiness. Studying her friend who is standing in the centre of the room, the narrator remembers:

to my surprise she neither wept nor blushed; composed, though grave, she stood, the central mark of all eyes. 'How can she bear it so quietly – so firmly?' I asked of myself. 'Were I in her place, it seems to me I'd wish the earth to open and swallow me up. She looks as if she were thinking

of something beyond her punishment – beyond her situation: of something not around here nor before her.’ (113)

For Jane, who is used to being invisible at Gateshead, the thought of this very public humiliation is distressing. Simultaneously impressed and discomfited by Helen’s lack of tears or shame, she suggests that she would not accept her sentence so meekly. Helen holds closely to a doctrine of Christian forgiveness, and Brontë captures the tension between the world of the body and that of the spirit by showing Helen’s body being disciplined while her spiritual musings help her to move ‘beyond her punishment’.

In chapter 7, Brontë includes yet another scene of trial and judgement. This time it is Jane who is forced to stand on a stool, which she describes as ‘a pedestal of infamy’, when Brocklehurst melodramatically accuses her of being an ‘agent’ of the ‘Evil one’. Understandably, in the face of the headmaster’s wrath she experiences a ‘rising hysteria’ yet manages to control it because Helen walks by and catches her eye. Jane says admiringly: ‘It was if a martyr, or hero, had passed a slave or victim, and imparted strength in the transit.’ The imagery equates heroism with martyrdom but even at this young age Jane knows she will not follow this path, preferring to fight rather than sacrifice herself, a trait that resurfaces when necessary throughout her story. However, she is fortified by this token of friendship, particularly affecting as she has never had a companion before and so takes ‘a firm stand on the stool’, allowing neither her emotions nor Brocklehurst to overwhelm her (130).

Female solidarity in the face of patriarchal repression recurs intermittently in the Lowood section. When Jane worries that Brocklehurst’s savage character reference will colour her peers’ opinion, Helen sagely counsels that he ‘is not a god, nor is he even a great and admired man. Had he treated you as an especial favourite, you would have found enemies’. She adds ‘as it is, the greater number would offer you sympathy if they dared’ (133). Miss Temple does more

than just offer sympathy, finding an equally public way to clear the narrator's name by reading aloud a letter from Gateshead's Dr Lloyd that vouches positively for her character. This type of practical action driven by kindness is something that comes to characterize Miss Temple. As her name implies, she provides a sanctuary for her pupils and, and fittingly is someone whom Jane comes to worship, regarding her as a cross between a fairy godmother and a vision of human perfection. She would have been recognizable to Brontë's contemporaries as the domesticated and moral stereotype of womanhood celebrated in the famous poem written a few years after *Jane Eyre*, Coventry Patmore's 'The Angel in the House'. The narrator describes her admiringly as 'tall, fair and shapely' (107) and she is also intelligent, as we later learn when she and Helen have a long conversation that forces Jane to exclaim, 'What stores of knowledge they possess!' (137). Not only does she nourish the pair's souls and minds but also attends to their material comfort when possible, offering them cake and a 'good' fire. These domestic touches are important to Jane as they represent a belonging and safety for which she craves and form part of the dialogue between privation and plenty that recurs throughout the novel.

However, Brontë makes it clear that Miss Temple's authority is limited. Brocklehurst takes her to task for ordering extra rations for the girls: 'Oh, madam, when you put bread and cheese, instead of burnt porridge, into these children's mouths, you may indeed feed their vile bodies, but you little think how you starve their immortal souls' (126). Coming as it does after a protracted enquiry about Lowood's finances, Brontë implies that his interest in the girls' appetites is economic rather than spiritual and his extreme dislike of their femininity is plain when he describes their bodies as 'vile'. Miss Temple is obviously displeased with his tone and sentiments and is described as standing by like a 'marble' statue, 'her mouth closed as if it would have required a sculptor's chisel to open it' (126). She cannot afford to express her anger and so literally and metaphorically keeps her mouth

shut. Class and gender ideology intersect here to silence Miss Temple. As a worker, she is not in a financial position to openly challenge Brocklehurst and as a Victorian woman she would have been expected to accept male superiority; as advised in such influential manuals as Sarah Stickney Ellis's *The Daughter's of England: Their Position in Society, Character and Responsibilities* (1842). Ellis suggests that the 'proper' woman was 'to be content to be inferior to men – inferior in mental power, in the same proportion that you are inferior in bodily strength' (601). The conventional Miss Temple would have deemed it improper to openly revolt against Brocklehurst's transparent penny-pinching. Like other maternal figures in the text, she cannot protect Jane adequately from harm; hers is possibly the fate of all 'mothers' in a society where their authority is ultimately inferior to that of the patriarch.

Brontë's fierce satire of Brocklehurst's insincerity comes to the fore in the scene when he catches a glimpse of one of the pupil's curls. He rants: 'my mission is to mortify in these girls the lusts of the flesh; to teach them to clothe themselves with shame-facedness and sobriety.' An underlying fear of female sexuality is captured in his reference to 'the lusts of the flesh' as is his hypocrisy when he is joined by his wife and daughters who are 'splendidly attired in velvet, silk and furs' with 'a profusion of light tresses, elaborately curled' peeking from beneath their hats (127). If the clergy come off poorly in this novel then so too does the practice of going to church. Jane finds nothing in the way of Christian consolation on her weekly visits there, but plenty of physical discomfort as her thin uniform offers little protection against the wintry elements. This is part of a larger thread that runs throughout Brontë's work as she consistently places value on the individual's communion with God rather than any public or mediated display of piety.

Jane's interest in morality and religion starts to develop at Lowood because of her conversations with Helen. They discuss, for example, two types of love, the human and the

divine, setting up an opposition that Brontë debates until the very last page of the novel. Jane champions the importance of human love when she pragmatically states: 'Look here; to gain some real affection from you, or Miss Temple, or any other whom I truly love, I would willingly submit to have the bone of my arm broken.' Helen responds: 'You think too much of the love of human beings . . . there is an invisible world and a kingdom of spirits . . . and God waits only the separation of spirit from flesh to crown us with our full reward' (133). The narrative actually goes on to expose both extremes as untenable; Helen's self-denial cannot allow for her survival in this world and Jane must learn to balance her craving for human love with an increasing self-reliance and faith in God's love.

It is largely due to Helen's affection that Jane asserts after a few weeks that she would not 'have exchanged Lowood with all its privations, for Gateshead and its daily luxuries' (139). This comment demonstrates that Jane equates happiness with being valued and educated. Its relatively optimistic tone is reflected in the coming of spring that transforms the school. In chapter 9 the narrator remembers how 'a greenness grew over those brown beds, which, freshening daily, suggested the thought that hope traversed them at night, and left each morning brighter traces of her steps.' Not only is hope figured as female but so too is nature; 'Lowood shook loose its tresses; it became all green, all flowery' (140). The fecundity and unruliness of femininity so feared by Brocklehurst in his young charges and represented by their 'tresses' is here allowed its way.

Nature though is not entirely benign as the heat helps spread typhus that turns the 'seminary' into a 'hospital'. In response, Jane's pragmatic side comes to the fore as well as her love of freedom. Because the teachers are occupied caring for the sick, rules are relaxed and the girls 'ramble in the woods, like gypsies, from morning to night'. Brocklehurst stays away and his charges escape the routines of the ultimately male-controlled institution to explore the natural, female world.

Instead of mourning their companions, they cannot help but revel in their liberty and are pleased with the extra portions of food they receive because the ‘sick could eat little’ (142). This spirit of self-preservation becomes even more tenacious as Jane matures.

While Helen avoids the typhus, her consumption gradually worsens. Jane creeps into her friend’s bed to say goodbye and the two fall asleep in an embrace in one of the novel’s most touching scenes. Helen dies in the night and the type of femininity she represents, concerned with self-sacrifice and denial, fades away too as a model for the narrator. Her friend may have escaped Lowood but only through dying, an option to which Jane, even at her lowest point, is never drawn.

The last chapter in this section begins with a summary of events as Jane glosses over a number of years – ‘I now pass a space of almost eight years in silence’ – reminding the reader that the narrator is manipulating both them and her story. She tells us that after the ‘typhus fever had fulfilled its mission of devastation’, the school was improved and yet she still felt confined within its walls and calls herself an inmate, ‘I remained an inmate of its walls, after its regeneration, for eight years: six, as a pupil, and two as a teacher’ (149). Miss Temple is very important to her during this period, standing ‘in the stead of mother, governess, and latterly companion’ and influencing her behaviour: ‘I had imbibed from her something of her nature and much of her habits; more harmonious thoughts’ and ‘what seemed better regulated feelings’. However the ‘what seemed’ part of the sentence warns the reader that these changes are not permanent and their reliance on Miss Temple’s presence becomes clear when her mentor gets married to a man who the narrator cuttingly states was ‘almost worthy of such a wife’. On the afternoon the newly-weds leave, Jane falls into turmoil and discontent, explaining ‘my mind had put off’ all it had borrowed of Miss Temple’ (150).

Rejecting the calm and ultimately domesticated womanhood represented by her former friend, Jane emerges as someone



who wants 'to seek real knowledge of life amidst its perils'. Using repetition to stress the strength of her craving, Jane recalls:

I desired liberty; for liberty I gasped; for liberty I uttered a prayer; it scattered on the wind then faintly blowing. I abandoned it and framed a humbler supplication; for change, stimulus: that petition too, seemed swept off into vague space; 'Then,' I cried, half desperate, 'Grant me at least a new servitude!' (151)

Realizing that her social position as an orphaned, female teacher of a relatively lowly status precludes such a heady experience as liberty, Jane quickly modifies her petition and pleads instead for a different environment. Her successful plan to advertise as a governess indicates the change between the girl who entered Lowood and the woman who leaves it behind. She has become someone who can begin to mould her future. Brontë though emphasizes the limited options available to poor, middle-class, single, women partly as a result of the restricted education that was thought proper for young ladies. For instance, when Bessie turns up to say goodbye to Jane, she enquires after her talents and is shown her former charge's aptitude for painting and playing the piano. These skills are of little practical use for any job apart from teaching or becoming a governess, an observation that recurs throughout wider nineteenth-century debates about the narrow remit of female education.

### THORNFIELD (CHAPTERS 11–27)

In the Thornfield chapters, the Gothic and romantic eclipse the realistic narrative that dominated the Lowood section of the book. The narrator is faced with a series of puzzles which she must decode, beginning with the relatively minor task of discovering that Mrs Fairfax is not the lady of the house and working towards uncovering Rochester's past. For many readers it is the most memorable part of *Jane Eyre* because it

delineates the development and disastrous consequences of their dramatic relationship and also sees the narrator coming to terms with her hopes and desires.

Brontë opens by self-consciously setting the scene: 'A new chapter in the novel is something like a new scene in a play; and when I draw up the curtain this time . . . you must fancy you see the George inn at Milcote' (160). As well as calling attention to the processes of storytelling, the mention of the theatre sets the reader up for the play-acting, masquerade and disguises that recur in Jane's courtship with Rochester. Jane goes on to offer her first impressions of Thornfield, typically a combination of the welcoming and the foreboding. For instance, her new room is described as a 'safe-haven', a 'bright little place' where 'the sun shone in through the gay blue chintz window curtains', emblematic of her optimism (165). But to get there she has to pass along a gallery with a 'very chill and vault-like air' which suggested to her 'cheerless ideas of space and solitude' (165). By describing the corridor as 'vault-like', Brontë gestures to what we subsequently learn is Thornfield's role as a 'tomb' for Rochester's mad wife and it is the third floor where Bertha is incarcerated for which the narrator saves much of her Gothic description: 'All these relics gave to the third storey of Thornfield Hall the aspect of a home of the past: a shrine of memory' (173). Although she is referring to the antiquated furniture, writing with the benefit of hindsight the narrator hints at the wider significance of this part of the house.

Jane is interested in the third floor's 'old English hangings crusted with thick work, portraying effigies of strange flowers, and stranger birds, and strangest human beings, – all of which would have looked strange, indeed, by the pallid gleam of moon-light' (173). The repetition of variations on 'strange' emphasize the uncanny nature of not just the tapestry but also the rooms that contain them and ultimately the inhabitants of the third storey. It is interesting to consider these comments in view of a Freudian analysis that would equate the upper floors of a building with Jane's mind and repressed

thoughts. In describing the corridor's appealing eccentricity, she unconsciously betrays her attitude to her thoughts and fancies, which even she admits are sometimes strange. Intrigued by the space she lingers in the passage which she says is 'like a corridor in some Bluebeard's castle' (175), a comparison that is unsurprising insofar as *Jane Eyre* borrows from both the Gothic and the fairy tale and the Bluebeard story appears in many guises throughout both genres. The most famous version of this story (appearing in Charles Perrault's 1695 collection of fairy tales) tells of a young girl who marries an older, richer man and due to her curiosity discovers the dismembered bodies of his former wives tucked away in a forbidden room in his castle. Brontë includes many of its elements as she gradually reveals Thornfield's secret with Jane acting as the curious girl and the third storey containing illicit spaces and the hidden wife.

Creating a tension with the Gothic aspect of the text are details of the more mundane practicalities of Jane's new life such as the routines that she establishes in her comfortable relationship with the rather two-dimensional housekeeper, Mrs Fairfax, and Rochester's ward, and possibly illegitimate daughter, Adèle Varens. Like Jane, Adèle is an orphan but there the similarities end as the child is 'foreign' in many contexts, in terms of nationality (French), religion (Catholic) and temperament, (precociously singing a song about a spurned lover). These attributes cause Jane to describe her as 'a lively child' who is 'sometimes wayward' and supposedly explains why the narrator encourages Adèle to become docile and pliant, those most feminine of Victorian qualities. However, readers have found it surprising that the narrator, who is herself unconventional, should state 'due to my plans for her improvement, she soon forgot her little freaks, and became obedient and teachable' (177). Brontë, maybe unconsciously, reveals how easy it is for individuals to collude with their own oppression. Here Jane polices another woman and watches her to see that she stays on an ideologically approved path. Jane might be driven by the benign desire to help Adèle become

less 'foreign' but effectively she adopts a similar role to Miss Temple, or even Brocklehurst, in attempting to 'improve' her charge and demonstrates a connection to Grace Poole who also monitors female behaviour on Rochester's behalf.

What makes Jane's inability to see her part in continuing female subjugation so surprising is that it comes just before an incisive *cri de couer* against a woman's lot. The battlement scene takes place on the roof of Thornfield in Chapter 12 and begins with a defensive address to the reader: 'Who blames me? Many no doubt; and I shall be called discontented' (178). Initially, she situates her restlessness as part of her nature and describes how she wanders Thornfield's grounds or paces its third storey to imagine a life of 'fire' and 'feeling' and escape the domestic confines. Shifting her analysis to blame society for what is wrong with her seemingly peaceful existence, she makes the most openly feminist speech of the novel:

It is in vain to say that human beings ought to be satisfied with tranquillity: they must have action; and they will make it if they cannot find it. Millions are condemned to a stiller doom than mine, and millions are in silent revolt against their lot. Nobody knows how many rebellions besides political rebellions ferment in the masses of life which people earth. Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties. And a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. (178)

On the one hand this diatribe is full of the language of slavery and boredom, inaction and stillness being the form that the 'fetters' take for Jane at this point, and on the other she talks about rebellion and ferment. These antithetical images reflect

the tension Jane feels in her life. Beginning by anticipating her reader's response, she makes a distinction between platitudes and lived experience; people ought to be 'satisfied with tranquillity' but in fact are in 'silent revolt'. Aware that her situation is not the worst she frames it as bad enough, defining her arena of battle as the domestic not the public and 'political'. She switches from talking generally about the 'masses of life which people earth' to focus on the subjects in whom she is particularly interested, 'women'. The assertion that they feel the same as men was revolutionary in an age in which men and women were ideologically positioned as complementary opposites. The narrator's anger is controlled but potent when she lists the occupations that supposedly satisfy the female population, emphasizing again the similarities between the sexes when she states that men would 'suffer' just as women do if forced to 'confine themselves' to these tasks.

The end of this speech is punctuated by what Jane thinks is Grace's maniacal laughter although it actually belongs to Bertha, Jane's 'dark' double who embodies all of the urges and appetites that the narrator habitually represses. Readers might applaud this rebelliousness but Bertha's laughter serves to remind us that to act on Jane's conclusions in Victorian England could lead to social exclusion, incarceration and even madness.

It is Jane's craving for adventure that drives her outside on a January afternoon to her fateful first meeting with her employer Edward Rochester. Brontë uses fire and ice symbolism to gesture to the competing impulses that drive Jane; the fiery 'crimson' sun setting over the icy landscape represents her position between an emotionally frozen outer life and the fiery turmoil of her inner life. The older narrator says that when young 'all sorts of fancies bright and dark tenanted my mind' and when she hears the sound of hooves imagines a figure from folklore, a 'Gytrash', 'who haunted solitary ways, and sometimes came upon belated travellers' (181).

As this image suggests, Brontë, from the start, associates Rochester with the irrational and the non-civilized and sets

the scene by combining a sublime natural landscape with an eerie story, preparing the reader for the entrance of someone with a key role to play. Undercutting the reader's expectations of Rochester as a knight on a white charger, his horse slips on the ice, a decidedly ordinary and unheroic event, and he requires Jane's assistance to right himself rather than vice versa. The narrator relives the scene but there is no talk of love-at-first-sight and she does not hint at Rochester's importance, describing him simply as a traveller on his way to Milcote. Brontë similarly refuses to offer us a romantic hero of the sort captured by Jane when she says: 'Had he been a handsome heroic-looking young gentleman, I should have not dared to stand thus questioning him' (182). Typically, she describes Rochester in negative terms suggesting she would have shied away from talking to a conventionally attractive man but can manage someone who is 'of middle height, and considerable breadth of chest. He had a dark face, with stern features and a heavy brow; his eyes and gathered eyebrows looked ireful and thwarted just now; he was past youth, but had not reached middle age: perhaps he might be thirty-five' (182).

It is partly due to the popularity of the Brontës' novels that the modern reader does not dismiss Rochester as without romantic potential in quite the same way as Jane. He is blatantly masculine in his build and colouring and obviously a man of the world with his 'fur-collared', 'steel-clasped' riding jacket reminiscent of a corsair (a popular literary figure of the period). Rochester is cast in the same mould as the Romantic poet Lord Byron (who died in 1824) with whose life and works the Brontë sisters were well acquainted. Byron portrayed himself as a romantic outsider, passionate and 'mad, bad and dangerous to know', as Lady Caroline Lamb described him in her journal after their first meeting. Brontë had already written extensively about a Byronic character in her juvenilia, the charismatic Duke of Zourna who exploited and abandoned a string of mistresses as has Rochester.

With Rochester's return Thornfield becomes busier; 'a rill from the outer world was flowing through it; it had a master: for my part I liked it better' (188). She immediately approves his presence even if it brings with him those social conventions she had previously avoided such as dressing for dinner. In chapters 13 and 14, Brontë develops their relationship through three long conversations. Rochester's gruff manner instantly, and perversely, puts Jane at her ease; 'I sat down quite disembarassed' she explained, as his 'harsh caprice' allows her 'the advantage' (190). Brontë here articulates their association in terms of power, which Jane temporarily holds, and although this is one aspect of their courtship they are just as frequently portrayed as mentally connected. Rochester, for example, echoes Jane's thoughts about the Gytrash by describing their first meeting using supernatural terms; 'when you came on me in Hay Lane last, I thought unaccountably of fairy tales, and had half a mind to demand whether you had bewitched my horse.' Matching his serious tone she denies the charge, responding that the 'men in green' had forsaken England. Sat next to them, 'Mrs Fairfax had dropped her knitting, and with raised eyebrows, seemed wondering what sort of talk this was' (192). Her surprise emphasizes that it was unusual for an employee and employer to talk in this unorthodox way and starts a pattern that continues until the end of the novel whereby their discussions help them to connect and actively work towards excluding others.

Alongside the more mundane details that Brontë allows to surface in this scene, such as Rochester's position as a second son, she also provides an insight into Jane's imagination through a discussion of the Gothic watercolours she painted while at Lowood. The portraits of disembodied women emerging from eerie landscapes populated by shipwrecks, mountains and dominated by the polar regions are described as 'elfish' and 'peculiar' and symbolize the peril that Jane feels as a working woman without family or connections (196). Rochester is amazed by this evidence that Jane possesses a rich interior life and a far from commonplace mind.

In Jane and Rochester's second long conversation, she is encouraged to learn about and judge his character. He claims his only superiority lies in the fact of his age and worldliness and repeats a number of times that he is old enough to be her father, establishing the oedipal connotations of their relationship early on (205). He then admits his current inferiority by presenting himself as someone who *once* was like Jane but is no longer: 'I was your equal at eighteen – quite your equal. Nature meant me to be, on the whole, a good man.' The parity that he claims here is ethical and is one of the predominant contexts for equality that Brontë sustains throughout the novel.

Jane turns to phrenology to help her figure out Rochester. This was a nineteenth-century discipline that attempted to understand psychology in more subtle ways than had previously existed. It grew out of the belief that specific sections of the brain dealt with different qualities or 'faculties' and that these could be traced in the shape of the skull. After Jane replies to his question 'do you think me handsome?' with the direct 'No, sir' (202), he then asks, what to a modern reader might seem a bizarre question, 'does my forehead not please you?' He lifts 'up his sable waves of hair which lay horizontally over his brow, and showed a solid enough mass of intellectual organs; but an abrupt deficiency where the suave sign of benevolence should have risen' (203). Rochester certainly proves lacking in benevolence but phrenology did not suggest a predetermined personality but rather pointed out an individual's propensities (Shuttleworth 1996: 60–63). It was down to the individual to develop their talents and Jane, before her meeting with Rochester, uses the language of phrenology to lament the possible wasting away of her potential, of her 'faculties' forced to wear 'the viewless fetters of an uniform and too still an existence' (185). Jane uses this discipline both as a tool to think about herself and also to turn on the characters she meets, scrutinizing their brows and skulls for clues to their interior life.

The mood of this scene turns from playful to reflective as Rochester's self-loathing slowly becomes apparent. He talks



about 'the poison of life' being 'remorse' to which Jane suggests 'repentance' as a cure, leading to 'reformation', thus anticipating the sequence of events that takes place much later in the narrative after Thornfield has been destroyed. However, at this point in the story he dismisses these ideas from a world-weary and dissolute standpoint. His cynical attitude is formed in part by the imperialist discourses of the age, illustrated when he chides Jane's naivety in contradicting his sentiment that 'most things free-born will submit to anything for a salary' (206). Jane strenuously avoids this temptation throughout the story and eventually proves him wrong.

The final conversation of the three occupies the first part of chapter 15 and takes place in Thornfield's garden. The less formal setting further erodes the barrier between master and servant as Rochester explains about his relationship with Adèle's mother, Céline. Brontë's contemporaries were surprised that he confided such erotic reminiscences to a girl half his age, a virgin and, perhaps even more pertinently to class-bound Victorian England, his employee. Brontë anticipated this critique and has Rochester acknowledge the singularity of the situation, but excuses his indiscretion, by explaining that Jane's mind is 'unique' and would not 'take infection' from his tales. Yet he is not entirely honest with her as he fails to mention Bertha. His praise then is really flattery and this sharing of intimacies becomes an act of verbal seduction. Jane says that she talked 'comparatively little' at this stage but 'had a keen delight in receiving the new ideas he offered, in imagining the new pictures he portrayed', pictures that have much to do with sex and jealousy (219).

The pleasures of confession drive both parties as Rochester wants to tell and Jane is excited to hear more as it brings both him and the wider world closer. As the narrative progresses, she repeats a number of times that she knows how to please Rochester in terms of conversation, continuing to link the verbal with the intimate and seductive. Being a good listener is a skill not without power as she subtly boasts: 'I knew the pleasure of vexing and soothing him by turns; it was one

I chiefly delighted in and instinct always prevented me from going too far' (234). Unmistakably the idea of 'going too far' carries an erotic subtext but at this stage in their relationship she manages to ensure that their exchanges are verbal rather than physical.

After fulfilling the conventionally passive female role of listener, Jane switches, again, to take up the traditionally masculine stance of active hero. As Terry Eagleton points out, this is symptomatic of the fact that 'Jane moves deftly between male and female roles in her courtship of Rochester' (31). Investigating a strange noise outside her room, she notices smoke coming from his bedroom and heroically dashes to the rescue, dousing a fire set by Bertha. Brontë completes the gender switch by representing Rochester swooning from smoke inhalation. He is effectively feminized by this response as it was largely associated with female characters in mid-nineteenth-century literature. When he regains consciousness, he thanks Jane for saving his life and says: 'People talk of natural sympathies; I have heard of good genii; – there are grains of truth in the wildest fable' (224). As Jane does not fit the narrow stereotypes of femininity with which he is comfortable he is forced to frame her as not of this world, a response to which he often returns whenever she moves outside the narrow bonds of appropriately female behaviour.

Jane further surprises Rochester when he discovers that she is not going to keep him company in his room, perhaps mistaking her unconventional attitude to gender roles with an unconventional stance on sexuality. Keeping Jane's hand clasped in his while thanking her, traps as much as comforts her, and sensing his sexual intent she flees from the room once 'he relaxed his fingers'. Having successfully escaped his desire she cannot so easily avoid her own and an unsettled night follows this encounter where 'billows of trouble rolled under surges of joy'. These uncontrollable waves of emotion are accompanied with tempestuous feelings described in terms of illness; she is 'feverish' and talks of 'delirium' and 'passion' (225). The touch of Rochester's hand has unleashed the barely

suppressed sexual feelings that Victorian society would frown upon and, on a more personal level, threaten Jane's own sensibilities and independence. Finishing on a cliffhanger, the chapter leaves the young Jane puzzling not only Rochester's intentions but also the mystery of Grace's continued employment. This generation of suspense is to be expected as *Jane Eyre* and Victorian novels generally were regularly published in three volumes, the so-called 'triple-decker' editions, and the aftermath of the fire marks the end of the first volume.

Brontë begins the next volume by thwarting the expectations of both reader and narrator and sending Rochester to a house party, allowing Jane to reflect on and analyse her rapport. After learning he is with Blanche Ingram, she offers herself stern counsel and places herself in an imaginary courtroom accused of the crime of thinking herself special to Rochester: '*You* gifted with the power of pleasing him? *You* of importance to him in any way? Go! Your folly sickens me.' After such harsh judgements she hands out her 'sentence': to draw a picture entitled 'Blanche, an accomplished lady of rank' followed by the 'Portrait of a Governess, disconnected, poor and plain' (237). The narrator reduces herself to an employee with nothing in her situation, personal or social, to recommend her to someone of a seemingly higher class. Jane and Rochester's hitherto personal and private relationship has been interrupted by the public, wider world and is put to the test even further with the advent of Thornfield's house-party.

In a patriarchal society women are often pitted against each other in competition over men and this is certainly the case when the Ingrams arrive in chapter 17. As with the majority of characters whom the narrator introduces, she tends to either love or loathe them on sight and instantly detests the Dowager Lady Ingram and her daughters Blanche and Mary. The mutual antipathy between the protagonists exists from the start when they meet in the drawing room; Jane's position demands that she curtsy and in response the Ingrams stare

at her as if she were of a different species. The narrator spends time detailing their appearance as she does with all of the characters in the novel, a result of both the widespread Victorian belief that status and class were visible on the individual's exterior and Brontë's particular interest in phrenology. Like the Reed children, Lady Ingram is only splendid in terms of the physical, possessing a fine physique but a face suffused with pride and a 'satirical' expression. That her interior is flawed disrupts the conventional pairing of 'beautiful' with 'good' and similarly Brontë undermines connections between 'ugliness' and 'badness' by describing the moral Jane as 'plain'.

The Ingrams are equally dismissive of Jane, but not for any personal reason as she barely registers on their consciousness as an individual and certainly not as a rival for Rochester's affections. To them she is simply the hired help and in her presence they dismiss governesses wholesale with Lady Ingram saying that even the word makes her nervous as she has 'suffered a martyrdom from their incompetency'. Blanche follows her mother's lead in offering a disparaging list of governesses' faults ranging from the 'low-spirited' to the 'immoral' (255). The last charge serves as a reminder that governesses were expected to forego personal relationships and the Ingrams' conversation emphasizes the disapprobation with which the wider society would greet Jane and Rochester's relationship if it became public knowledge. It also reminds the reader of the sort of snobbery that governesses had to endure and was personally experienced by Brontë and her sisters.

As the house party continues Jane is forced to watch Rochester from the sidelines, an act from which she actually gains a great deal of erotic satisfaction. She recalls that as soon as she could 'gaze without being observed, then my eyes were drawn involuntarily to his face: I could not keep their lids under control: they would rise, and the iris would fix on him. I looked and had an acute pleasure in looking, – a precious, yet poignant pleasure; pure gold with a steely point

of agony' (252). Repeating the word 'pleasure', she cannot prevent herself from staring at him and appropriates an objectifying gaze that is usually a male prerogative. In an act that verges on the masochistic, combining 'agony' and ecstasy, she becomes an active desiring subject rather than a passive object of desire. Watching him she asserts that she understands the 'language of his countenance' and reads there the fact that Blanche '*could not charm him*' (265). The italics emphasize her incredulous concession that despite her rival's attempts to fascinate, and her obvious social and physical advantages, she cannot win him. Calling on the image of Cupid, she adds 'Arrows that continually glanced off from Mr Rochester's breast . . . might, if shot by a surer hand, have quivered keen in his proud heart' (265). The 'surer hand' to which she refers is her own, reflecting the certainty of her connection to Rochester and the violence of the metaphor reflects the strength of her emotions.

Social convention means that she must 'conceal her sentiments' and it is in these house-party chapters that pretence and play-acting are brought to the fore most obviously in the game of charades and when Rochester, disguised as a gypsy, practises palmistry (253). He later admits to Jane that he masterminded these episodes to make her jealous, which is obvious to the reader from the outset. For example, when he pantomimes a marriage ceremony with Blanche, he shows Jane a potential future where he is married to someone else to emphasize her consequent sense of loss. In the gypsy scene he works in an underhand fashion to try and manipulate Jane to his way of thinking by implying that their relationship is benignly fated. Dressed as 'old crone' he states 'Chance has meted you a measure of happiness . . . She has laid it carefully on one side for you . . . It depends on yourself to stretch out your hand, and take it up' (281).

Rochester's attempts to control Jane's future, her 'story', are largely unsuccessful. His gypsy outfit does not fool her and Brontë emphasizes that he can neither mask his true self from Jane nor trick her into accepting an analysis of the

situation with which she does not agree. Angry at his attempts at deceit, she protests ‘it is hardly fair’ and unwittingly takes revenge on Rochester by informing him of Mason’s arrival (283). When his past resurfaces in the form of Bertha’s brother, Rochester staggers and needs Jane’s support, reminding him that however much he tries to control her it is more often than not the reverse that holds true.

Shortly after, Rochester calls on Jane’s assistance to help him care for Mason whom Bertha has attacked, dramatically moving the narrator from marginalized onlooker to centre stage. Watching over Mason while Rochester hurries for a doctor, she cannot resist wringing the drama out of one of the most Gothic scenes in the novel. Emphasizing her leading role, she exclaims: ‘Here then I was in the third story, fastened into one of its mystic cells; night around me; a pale and bloody spectacle under my hands; a murderess hardly separated from me by a single door’ (291). Her imagination runs riot evidenced by the fact that Bertha, for instance, is not actually a murderess. Jane also imagines her, although thinking it is Grace Poole, a ‘mocking demon’ and ‘carrion-seeking bird of prey’ (292). Brontë constantly figures Bertha as abhuman, a label given to a liminal Gothic figure who blurs the boundaries between the human and non-human. Mason, for instance, talks about her in animal terms – ‘she worried me like a tigress’ and later compares her to a vampire describing how ‘[s]he sucked the blood: she said she’d drain my heart’ (294).

Although both Jane and her double do not behave in stereotypically feminine ways, Bertha represents an extreme form of female rebelliousness. Here, as later in the novel, Bertha plays out Jane’s unconscious fantasies and ‘pays back’ Rochester as the patriarchal figure who attempts to marginalize them both, Jane behind the curtains in the drawing room witnessing his flirtation with Blanche and Bertha imprisoned in the attic. Their revenge, if that is what is, remains limited as after the event Bertha is still incarcerated and her fate acts as a warning to Jane of what would happen should she ever allow herself to be ruled by rage or passion.

In chapter 21 Jane is called away from Thornfield by her dying aunt and returns to Gateshead nine years after she had left the 'hostile roof with a desperate and embittered heart' (311). Brontë accomplishes several things by doing this. It allows the reader's anticipation to mount about the nature of the third storey and Jane and Rochester's relationship; it moves on the inheritance sub-plot with Aunt Reed's death-bed confession; and the narrator can measure how much she has changed over the years. Walking towards Gateshead, she muses:

I still felt a wanderer on the face of the earth: but I experienced firmer trust in myself and my own powers, and less withering dread of oppression. The gaping wound of my wrongs, too, was now quite healed; and the flame of resentment extinguished. (311)

In many ways this proves to be the case as despite her aunt's unfriendly welcome, Jane resolutely stays and has the necessary confidence and social skills to win over her cousins Georgiana and Eliza. In a satisfying, if brutal, example of poetic justice, John has committed suicide and his sisters are not only socially isolated but have failed to mature into balanced adults, exposing not only their limitations but those of Mrs Reed as a mother. They occupy opposite ends of the emotional spectrum with Georgiana possessing 'feeling without judgement' and Eliza 'judgement untempered by feeling' (320). The narrator rejects both modes of being although they are positions with which she struggles at various times in the narrative.

Perhaps though it is this portrayal of herself as far superior to her erstwhile tormenters that suggests the narrator has not entirely 'extinguished' the 'flame of resentment'. After the death of Mrs Reed, her revenge on her cousins is complete when she effectively silences them by saying, 'I shall not have occasion to refer to her [Eliza] or her sister again' (326). Dismissing their influence on her and her story, Brontë exposes

a gap between what the narrator says and what she feels, revealing one of the movements described by Annette Tromly whereby ‘Brontë’s narrators create personal mythologies about themselves, mythologies which in their view endow their lives with heightened moral significance’ (see Lodge 2009: 51). The adult Jane who narrates the book wants to see herself as a forgiving and empathic character rather than the ‘mad cat’ of the red-room.

Returning to Thornfield, Jane thinks about the welcome that awaits her and emphasizes how important a sense of love and belonging are to her: ‘there is no happiness like being loved by your fellow creatures; and feeling that your presence is an addition to their comfort’ (330). Brontë emphasizes Jane’s excitement about the prospect of seeing Rochester and adds a sense of urgency to the scene by moving into the present tense, as she does a handful of times in the novel:

I have but a field or two to traverse, and then I shall cross the road and reach the gates. How full the hedges are of roses! But I have no time to gather any; I want to be at the house. I pass a tall briar, shooting leafy and flowery branches across the path; I see the narrow stile with stone steps; and I see – Mr Rochester sitting there, a book and a pencil in his hand; he is writing. (328)

The narrator’s inner life is so vivid that she cannot help but relive this important moment and the roses and briars, conventionally symbols of romance, prepare the reader for Jane’s impulsive confession to Rochester, ‘I am strangely glad to get back to you; and wherever you are is my home’ (330).

Away from social spaces that stress Rochester and Jane’s inequalities, the natural world allows their affinities to flourish. Brontë makes use of this fact again shortly in the most overtly romantic scene in the novel where the couple finally reveal their true feelings to one another. It is mid-summer’s eve, a time imbued with a sense of magic, and Jane strolls down to the orchard that she describes as



'Eden-like'. Brontë uses the sensual language of scent, sound and colour to capture its beauty; 'jasmine, pink and rose have long been yielding their evening sacrifice of incense', the nightingale 'warbles' in the wood and the trees are laden with 'ripe' fruit. The atmosphere is one of plenty, fecundity and natural bounty. Yet, the fruit of the apple tree in biblical terms brought knowledge but also a loss of innocence and it is interesting that Brontë uses the term 'sacrifice' to describe how the flowers fragranced the air, hinting at the undercurrent of danger that worries this romantic encounter. Jane could be considered as the 'sacrificial lamb' about to become more intimate with a married man who has deliberately misled her.

In keeping with the darker elements of the scene, when Rochester comes upon Jane he continues play-acting and insinuates that he will soon marry Blanche. Thinking that he is expecting her to stay and witness his married life, she is roused into a passionate moment of self-assertion:

Do you think, because I am poor, obscure, plain and little, I am soulless and heartless? – You think wrong! – I have as much soul as you, and full as much heart! And if God had gifted me with some beauty, and much wealth, I should have made it hard for you to leave me . . . I am not talking to you now through the medium of custom, conventionalities or even mortal flesh: – it is my spirit that addresses your spirit; just as if we both passed through the grave, and we stood at God's feet, equal, – as we are! (338)

Dropping her mask of prim governess, Jane reveals her previously unspoken desires to Rochester. The fragmentation of the passage reflects her vehemence, with its plentiful exclamation marks and dashes reproducing her agitation. She begins by laying out her disadvantages, that she is not beautiful and does not possess a fortune. Then, discarding the conventional measures of suitability and the usual attributes of a romantic heroine, she goes on to claim an equality

of spirit with Rochester. He responds to her passion with a kiss and a request: 'I ask you to pass through life at my side – to be my second self, and best earthly companion' (338).

The narrator explains that her younger self had little faith in these claims but Rochester eventually wins her over swearing: 'God, pardon me! . . . and man, meddle not with me: I have her and I will hold her' (340). Repudiating the forces that might stop him ('God' and 'man'), he foregrounds his assertion that he is in control of his fate. With the knowledge of hindsight the older narrator says how she should have noticed the 'savage' way in which he mutters this challenge driven as it is by knowledge that he is about to commit bigamy. Bringing home the point that the engagement will be tempestuous, Brontë introduces a thunderstorm which splits a horse chestnut tree in two to symbolize the fury unleashed by this course of action and forewarning of Jane and Rochester's later separation (121).

Chapter 24 charts the month of their engagement which despite Jane's happiness reads as a struggle not only between herself and her 'master' but also between her own conflicting desires. She is suspicious when Rochester treats her to compliments, praising her as 'blooming' with 'rosy lips' and 'radiant hazel eyes' (342). Jane undercuts this litany of her physical attributes by dryly adding 'I had green eyes reader; but you must excuse the mistake.' In focusing on her appearance Rochester is unconsciously reminding Jane of the physical aspect of their coming marriage, causing a mild panic in a sexually inexperienced woman that becomes more pronounced as the chapter progresses. It is not only the sexual aspect of their relationship which is unsettling as in response to his calling her the 'soon to be Jane Rochester', she says that what 'the announcement sent through me, was something stronger than was consistent with joy – something that smote and stunned: it was, I think, almost fear' (343). She explains that this is because her life has the feel of a 'fairy-tale' or 'a day-dream', a sense of unreality which is not helped by Rochester lazily taking refuge in the conventional romantic

niceties while she fights to preserve the equalities that she had struggled to gain.

Jane equates Rochester's compliments with falsity and commands: 'I don't call you handsome, sir, though I love you most dearly: far too dearly to flatter you. Don't flatter me' (344). He pays little attention to her plea and places her on a pedestal by referring to her as his angel. Uncomfortable with this notion she lightly says – 'I am not an angel' and asserts 'and will not be one until I die' (345). Despite her accompanying laughter, she wants to avoid a stereotype that diminishes her complexity as a person. Rochester demonstrates a typical Victorian attitude towards women in reducing them to one of two types, either angels or whores, denied any type of physicality or defined by it. In doing so he unsettles the narrator who is drawn to the ways in which Rochester displays unconventional attitudes. Brontë illustrates the gap that is opening between them; on a visit to a material warehouse he urges Jane to select 'rich silk of the most brilliant amethyst dye' whereas she insists on 'sober black satin and pearl-grey silk'. He wants to clothe her as an object of desire and by this point she can no longer laugh at his wishes. Feeling 'a sense of annoyance and degradation' she wishes she had 'ever so small an interdependency' as 'I can never bear being dressed like a doll' (354).

The narrator deploys the vocabulary of slavery to describe her plight when Rochester sends for his family jewellery. It is obvious to both Jane and reader that he wants to dress her in a way he thinks appropriate to her new station when he asserts: 'I will myself put the diamond chain round your neck, and the circlet on your forehead' and 'clasp the bracelets on these fine wrists' (344). The jewellery is transformed into chains that bind and bracelets that symbolically act as handcuffs. Rochester's treatment of her as his captive leads her to question the dependency written into Victorian marriages where women were supposed to rely on their husbands physically, psychologically and economically.

Obviously interested in exploring women's social standing, it is less clear if Brontë also interrogates the imperial aspects of nineteenth-century society by referring to slaves or is simply using the imagery as shorthand for someone mistreated by society. A different example from Jane's courting days suggest that, as discussed in the previous chapter, she is unable to rise above the Orientalist attitude of her contemporaries. This is a perspective whereby the West, in order to feel superior, attributes to the East qualities and practices it does not want to own; the Orient is represented as exotic and sensual but also a place where irrationality and cruelty reigns (Purchase 2006: 103). When Rochester teases Jane by saying that he would not 'exchange this one little English girl for the Grand Turk's seraglio [harem]' he positions the 'Turk' as the exotic Other who acquires multiple women. Yet for all his merriment, Rochester could be described as possessing his own 'harem' with his collection of lovers past and present. Jane does not appreciate being considered in this context:

The Eastern allusion bit me . . . 'I'll not stand you an inch in the stead of a seraglio,' I said 'so don't consider me an equivalent for one: if you have a fancy for anything in that line, away with you sir, to the bazaars of Stamboul without delay . . .' (355)

To distance herself from these 'foreign' and un-Christian happenings she then sets herself in direct opposition to a harem inmate, explaining how she would 'go out as a missionary to preach liberty' to them. Foreshadowing a temptation to which she very nearly succumbs at Moor-house, in this section at least Brontë is very conservative in her approach to the foreign and non-English.

Going on to summarize her courtship, Jane says that the task of managing Rochester was 'not an easy one: often I would rather have pleased than teased him' (361). Although referring to conversation, the erotic undertones of 'pleased'

and 'teased' are plain and suggest the narrator's struggle is not just with Rochester but also her own physical desires. Fiancées in this period were expected to guard both their own and their partner's morals and although Jane follows this path she admits she would rather not have kept him at arm's length. She certainly claims no moral or spiritual authority in doing so, remembering how 'I could not, in those days, see God for his creature, of whom I had made an idol' (361). This comment captures the strength of her feelings but also suggests that the young Jane had lost her way by pursuing earthly love at all costs.

The uneasiness generated by this confession continues into chapter 25 where Brontë employs a more Gothic mode of writing to capture Jane's sense of unreality the night before the wedding. Cases packed for the honeymoon, and awaiting Rochester's return from a business trip, Jane discusses her new identity. Prompted by the unattached baggage labels, she says that Mrs Rochester 'did not exist: she would not be born till to-morrow some time after eight o'clock a.m.; and I would wait to be assured she had come into the world alive, before I assigned to her all that property' (362). Using the language of childbirth, she positions her new self as a different person, a baby whose safe delivery she does not take for granted, exposing an underlying anxiety about sex and reproduction. Jane captures the extent of her estrangement from 'Mrs Rochester' by stating that 'garments *said to be hers* displaced *my* black stuff Lowood frock' (my italics). Disconcerted, she shuts 'the closet, to conceal the strange, wraith-like apparel it contained' (362). She represents her future self in terms of insubstantiality comparable to that of an unborn baby or a ghost. Escaping outside, she finds that a fierce wind buffets Thornfield: the extreme weather reflecting her own unsettled feelings. The moon, symbol of the maternal, appears momentarily but offers no comfort to her daughter: 'her disk was blood-red and half-overcast; she seemed to throw on me one bewildered, dreary glance, and buried herself again instantly in the deep drift of cloud', a bad omen that Jane ignores (363).

When Rochester finally arrives, Jane feverishly recounts a series of dreams to him, expressing anxieties that she cannot admit openly. In the first she is ‘burdened with the charge of a little child: a very small creature, too young and too feeble to walk’, yet another incarnation of the future ‘Mrs Rochester’. In a second dream she loses grip of this ‘child’ completely, forewarning of the events to come. The next ‘dream’, that reader and narrator later learn was real, concerns Bertha coming into her room, trying on her wedding veil in front of the mirror, tearing this symbol of marriage in two and furiously trampling it into the floor. Unlike the new ‘Mrs Rochester’, the former one is no nebulous ghost and Bertha is instead likened to another supernatural figure, ‘the foul German spectre – the Vampyre’, an icon of distorted passions and excessive desire (371). Reading her as Jane’s criminal double who acts out the narrator’s darkest fantasies suggests Jane is not just apprehensive about her marriage but angry at an institution where women willingly place themselves in a position of servitude to male masters. Catching a glimpse of Bertha’s ‘savage’ face in the mirror with ‘swelled and dark’ lips and ‘blood-shot eyes’, the description captures the grotesque aspect of passion and its unacceptability in the nineteenth-century woman. It hints at Jane’s anxiety about her own unquenchable sexual feelings as Bertha in the veil is an image of the bride-to-be, the role Jane is about to adopt.

Despite these underlying tensions, when the day of the wedding dawns, Jane allows herself to be dressed and this time the reflection in the mirror shows ‘a robed and veiled figure, so unlike my usual self that it seemed almost the image of a stranger’ (374). Taken in tandem the two images in the mirror echo the twin sides of Jane’s temperament, the one concerned with passion and embodiment and the other her glacial and isolated self. Rochester waits for her ‘grimly resolute’ and so this pair, as far from the image of a conventional couple on their wedding day as can be imagined, makes for the church. When Mr Briggs, a lawyer sent by her uncle,

and Mason interrupt the ceremony to inform her that Rochester is already married, she stands silently while the accusations and expositions take place. Brontë emphasizes Jane's situation as a pawn manipulated by these male characters linking her to Bertha who is the alleged cause of the disruption. A key moment in terms of the plot, the narrator finally reveals Thornfield's secret to the reader, causing us to swiftly reassess the situation in light of Rochester's confession that 'I have been married; and the woman to whom I was married lives' (379–380).

Inviting them to go and meet his 'mad' wife and 'judge whether or not I had a right to break the compact' Rochester takes the lawyer, priest and Jane to see Bertha (380). These three figures represent different parts of society and demonstrate his desire for worldly, spiritual and personal exoneration for his attempted bigamy. Arriving at the mysterious third storey, they find a 'figure' in 'the deep shade at the further end of the room' running 'backwards and forwards'.

What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight, tell: it grovelled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal: but it was covered with clothing; and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its head and face. (380)

Jane compares Bertha to a wild animal. This Mrs Rochester cannot speak, is hardly able to stand upright and is referred to as an 'it' rather than a human being. Post-colonial readings of the novel suggest that Brontë portrays her as inhuman in order to excuse Rochester's treatment and by extension that of the British imperial project as one of its supposed aims was to 'civilise' those 'foreigners' with whom it came into contact. On glimpsing Rochester, Bertha 'sprang and grappled his throat viciously' and the ensuing struggle draws out the similarities between husband and wife: 'She was a big woman, in stature almost equalling her husband, and corpulent besides: she showed virile force in this contest' (381). Her stature and

‘virility’ are conventionally masculine traits and the fact that she is ‘equal’ to Rochester suggests that in many ways she is his double as much as Jane’s. Certainly the behaviours he later catalogues and condemns in her are ones in which he too has indulged. However, for a woman to do these things marks her insane, which is a double standard lost on the narrator but certainly not the modern reader.

Jane’s silence in this instance is the opposite of Bertha’s ‘dumbness’ and a demonstration of her rationality and reason; not for Jane the hysterics that might mark her as the next candidate for the attic. She retreats silently to her room with ‘no explosion of passion, no loud altercation, no dispute, no defiance or challenge’. This list of things that did not happen echoes the fact that she did ‘not’ marry Rochester. That she feels emotionally frozen is encapsulated in her answer to the rhetorical question: ‘Where was the Jane Eyre of yesterday?’

Jane Eyre, who had been an ardent, expectant woman – almost a bride – was a cold, solitary girl again; her life was pale, her prospects desolate. A Christmas frost had come at midsummer: a white December storm had whirled over June; ice glazed the ripe apples, drifts crushed the blowing roses. (383)

By speaking about herself in the third person the narrator emphasizes that the bride-to be and jilted bride are very different people. Brontë uses landscape imagery to represent Jane’s feelings and this description of winter at the height of summer portrays the unnaturalness of her situation. The storm that destroys the natural spoils of summer symbolizes the destruction of her burgeoning hopes and happiness. Jane here succumbs to the embittered side of her personality that threatens to overwhelm her at various points. This chapter, the last in volume 2, finishes with a failure of imagination as she is unable to find the words to pray and so receive the consolation of prayer. In ‘worshipping’ Rochester she has lost her connection to God and the ability to make coherent sense



of events. Stating that the 'bitter hour cannot be described', she borrows the words of the psalms to describe her plight and her sense that the fires of her passions were being extinguished; 'the waters came into my soul; I sank in deep mire' (384). Some early readers were uncomfortable with Brontë using a biblical quotation about feeling severed from God to describe Jane's sense of separation from Rochester.

Jane's silence endures into the start of the final volume of *Jane Eyre*, where she lets Rochester explain his past while slowly steeling herself to leave Thornfield. Although the narrator talks little to him, she addresses the reader at several points during his speeches, beginning with the exclamation, 'Reader! I forgave him at the moment and on the spot' adding 'yet not in words, not outwardly; only at my heart's core' (388). Realizing that he is truly sorry, she still fears the seductiveness of his words and does not want to provide him with the ammunition necessary to destroy her resolve. For as she tells the reader, her 'Conscience' and 'Reason' were struggling to exert their authority over 'Feeling', an interior battle that leaks out in her confused assertion, 'I must leave him, it appears. I do not want to leave him – I cannot leave him' (389).

Rochester's explanation of his marriage to Bertha is interesting from a post-colonial perspective as it represents the life and assumptions of an English colonial subject abroad. What starts as an exotic and beguiling environment to the second son sent to marry his fortune, quickly deteriorates into a living hell with the island's air like 'sulphur steams' and Bertha's inhuman 'wolfish cries' filling his home with 'the sounds of the bottomless pit' (398). Rochester figures her as excessive:

I lived with that woman upstairs four years, and before that time she had tried me indeed: her character ripened and developed with frightful rapidity; her vices sprung up fast and rank . . . What a pigmy intellect she had – and what giant propensities! How fearful were the curses those propensities entailed on me! Bertha Mason – the true

daughter of an infamous mother, – dragged me through all the hideous and degrading agonies which attend a man bound to a wife at once intemperate and unchaste. (397)

Rochester's language captures Bertha's vigour and voluptuousness but casts these qualities negatively, as producing base appetites unfitting for a woman. Her crimes here seem primarily sexual; she is 'unchaste' with a 'giant' sexual passion, connecting her to a parade of Victorian literary female characters whose sexuality make them mad or monstrous culminating in Bram Stoker's vampire women who appear in *Dracula* (1897).

Jane refuses to accept Rochester's demonization of female desire. Reminding him of Bertha's humanity, that she is 'an unfortunate lady', she admonishes: 'you speak of her with hate – with vindictive antipathy. It is cruel – she cannot help being mad.' He responds: 'if you were mad, do you think I would hate you?' to which she replies in her usual forthright fashion: 'I do indeed sir.' Demonstrating a pragmatic awareness of Rochester's imperfect personality, she also maintains her connection to Bertha (391).

Continuing with his story, Rochester describes how at his lowest point, on a night that quivered 'with the ferment of a tempest', the storm broke suddenly with a 'sweet wind from Europe' reminding him of the 'liberty', 'Hope' and 'Regeneration' offered by his homeland. On a personal level, Rochester is oblivious to his part in the making of a living hell and on a broader one, he is unconscious of the stereotypical colonial hierarchies he asserts whereby Europe stands for all that is pure, reasoned and temperate whereas the colonized country is synonymous with excess, irrationality and sin. How much of this attitude Brontë herself shared we will never know although in *Jane Eyre* she undeniably favours England above other countries.

Following his epiphany, Rochester explains how he moved to Europe and like a typically restless Byronic hero lives 'first in one capital, then another', searching for his 'ideal woman

amongst English ladies, French comtesses, Italian signoras and German Gräfinnen' (402). This cosmopolitan lifestyle and the concomitant affairs did not bring him contentment and he states: 'I now hate the recollection of time I passed with Céline, Giacinta and Clara [former mistresses]' (403). At this confession, the narrator makes her own to the reader and says she knew then if 'under any pretext' she became 'the successor of these poor girls, he would one day regard me with the same feeling which now in his mind desecrated their memory' (403). What is enlightening about this comment is that it shows how Jane is driven to refuse his cajoling as much by pragmatic self-interest as conscience and self-sacrifice to the moral high ground. The trio of discarded mistresses offer another stereotype of Victorian womanhood with which Jane might sympathize but whose ranks she does not want to join.

Having finally revealed all, Rochester tries to match Jane's pragmatism by arguing that no one will be offended if she lives with him out of wedlock as nobody watches over her: 'Who in the world cares for *you*?' At last roused to indignation she responds: '*I* care for myself. The more solitary, the more friendless, the more unsustained I am, the more I will respect myself' (408). Facing Rochester's 'flaming' fury, she matches it with an 'indomitable' defiance realizing that she does not have to bend to anyone else's expectations be it Mrs Reed and Brocklehurst or even those kinder 'masters', Miss Temple and Rochester.

Evading Rochester's embrace, Jane rushes away, falling asleep to dream of the red-room at Gateshead suggesting her growing sense of claustrophobia and panic. Another portent appears to her when the moon bursts from behind a cloud and takes on a female form; '[i]t spoke to my spirit immeasurably distant was the tone, yet so near it whispered in my heart – "My daughter, flee temptation!" "Mother, I will". So I answered after I had waked from a trance-like dream' (411). Lacking a real mother to advise her, Jane unconsciously creates one, externalizing and personifying

her conscience that is fighting the temptation to stay. This section of the novel ably demonstrates that Brontë does not always portray reason as a reliable guide. Rochester's argument that nobody cares whether or not Jane stays with him is, on one level, reasonable. But as the moon's intervention suggests, duty and reason are not to be followed blindly at the expense of feelings and intuition, and if Jane wants to preserve her integrity she must trust her own sense of what is appropriate and ethical.

Spurred into action, she leaves Thornfield under cover of darkness, collapsing from the guilt she feels in abandoning Rochester. She addresses the reader and says that she hopes we never experience a similar feeling of causing a loved one pain; 'for never may you, like me, dread to be the instrument of evil to what you wholly love' (413). Unable to stand, she crawls away so mirroring Bertha in her cell. The difference between the two characters is that Jane clings on to her independence and self-control and so saves herself from her double's fate, although at a cost.

Chapter 28 marks Jane's transition from Thornfield to Moor-House (or Marsh-End as it is known locally) as she physically and mentally distances herself from her life as Rochester's fiancée. Brontë vividly focuses on the realities of being a single woman with no connections or money when Jane finds herself on an unknown moor, 'absolutely destitute'. The combination of lack of material comforts and mental anguish make her first few days of newfound freedom a trial she very nearly does not survive. Brontë describes the narrator's state using the language of bloodiness and pain. Jane possesses a 'sad heart' riddled with 'gaping wounds' and 'inward bleeding' and is figured as an 'impotent' bird with 'both wings broken' still attempting to reach her erstwhile 'master'; an example of the bird imagery that recurs throughout the novel (415).

Initially the narrator's distress proves the greatest hardship as on her first night on the moor she asks the personified Mother Nature for repose and is rewarded with a mild night

and warm bed of heather on which to sleep. Away from the idol she had made of Rochester, she reconnects not only with the universal Mother figure but also the 'universal' father-figure and gazing at the stars is comforted by God's 'omnipotence, His omnipresence' (416). Although providence later answers her prayers, here she is left to nature's mercies who is, as Brontë suggested during the Lowood section, a fickle mistress and as the weather worsens Jane suffers from cold and hunger.

Enquiring about the possibilities of employment in the area, a local shopkeeper explains curtly to Jane that there is little around for women, adding, "Poor folk mun get on as they can" (418). After describing how her offer of a handkerchief in exchange for bread is refused, she stresses to the reader how unpleasant it is to 'dwell on these details' and that 'the moral degradation, blent with physical suffering, form too distressing a recollection ever to be willingly dwelt on' (420). While Brontë is clearly interested in revealing the predicaments faced by the poor, the focus is on Jane as an individual rather than a member of a particular class, prompting the narrator to cut short her tales of life on the breadline with the dismissive, 'Let me condense now. I am sick of the subject' (421). Although humbled by having to beg for food, she remains socially conventional and bourgeois in seeing begging as 'morally' degrading. Able to adopt different class allegiances at various points in the novel, however close she finds herself to the working class she is not really one of their number. After all, the narrator is writing from her position as a wealthy heiress. She also is the same person who as a child admitted she would rather be unhappy in a wealthy house than happy in a poor one, realizing 'I was not heroic enough to purchase liberty at the price of caste' (82).

Jane's innate social 'superiority' is recognized by the Rivers siblings, Diana, Mary and St John, when weak from hunger she collapses on their doorstep after being drawn across the moor by a light in their window. Providence answers her plea for aid when peering in she discovers an oasis of calm,

hinting at the familial ties that are later revealed by saying: 'I had nowhere seen such faces as theirs: and yet, as I gazed on them, I seemed intimate with every lineament' (424). Although initially turned away by their housekeeper, Hannah, St John admits Jane inside when he and hears her stoical 'I believe in God. Let me try and wait his will in silence' (428). She is described by one of the Rivers as a 'mere spectre', a fitting image for someone who has shed her former life and not yet commenced on her next.

### MOOR-HOUSE AND MORTON (CHAPTERS 29–36)

In the Moor-House section of the novel Jane experiments with a variety of different roles as she moves from independent school-teacher to beloved family member and heiress. Brontë continues her critique of the church and institution of marriage by focusing on Jane's relationship with the unbending patriarch St John, a minister and suitor who strangely possesses no concept of what it is to love.

Jane spends her first days with the Rivers convalescing in bed, reassuring the reader that her natural quality was recognized by the sisters, who whispered at her bedside, 'she is not an uneducated person, I should think by her manner of speaking: her accent was quite pure' (432). It is possible to read Moor-House as an idealized portrait of Brontë's family home, Haworth parsonage. Emily is represented by the authoritative Diana and Anne transformed into the reserved Mary. Their housekeeper Tabby corresponds to the plain-speaking Hannah who once Jane is recovered from her fever is corrected, 'You are mistaken in supposing me a beggar. I am no beggar' (453). Similarities between Haworth and Moor-House help explain why W. A. Craik argues that the Rivers' home becomes 'a symbol of security and family unity' and is largely the antithesis of Thornfield with its sensational events and Gothic undertones (1986: 10). She also rightly suggests that despite providing Jane with a sense of stability, it also subjects her 'to more anxiety than Thornfield ever did', and so '[t]o read about Moor-House reproduces Jane's

experiences there; it is both less absorbing than Thornfield, and a great deal more trying' (10).

Largely what 'tries' Jane is her relationship with St. John that rapidly develops into a power struggle where once again she has to fight to maintain her personal integrity. His sisters she finds sympathetic and like-minded souls and the three of them share a 'perfect congeniality of tastes, sentiments and principles' (444). This sense of total compatibility is typical of the narrator's attitude, mentioned previously, whereby she either dismisses or adores people. Diana and Mary soon return to their posts as governesses leaving Jane in the company of the industrious St. John whom she describes as possessing a face that 'riveted the eye: it was like a Greek face, very pure in outline; quite a straight classic nose; quite an Athenian mouth and chin. It is seldom, indeed, the English face comes so near the antique models as did his' (438–39). Physically he is almost too handsome to be real and in comparing him to an 'antique model' the narrator posits him a work of art rather than human, which turns out to be a prescient assessment of his humanity. He is the antithesis of Rochester in terms of his looks and temperament; St John is the ice to Rochester's fire, his 'watery' qualities suggested by his surname Rivers.

Jane finds him an abstractly good man and respects his calm strength although determines to break down his reserve: 'I could never rest in communication with strong, discreet and refined minds, whether male or female, till I had passed the outworks of conventional reserve, and crossed the threshold of confidence, and won a place by their heart's very hearthstone' (471). Figuring the psychological space as a material one, she is not content to stay on the outside but wants to reach the very heart of the person. It is typical of Jane's innate self-confidence that she believes this possible but also indicative of her relationship with St. John that she misinterprets what lies beneath, the image of the hearth suggesting a domesticity that we learn is entirely absent from his character.

Yet Jane is not entirely without insight. For instance, when she accepts the post of village schoolteacher, she realizes that St John's surprised questions – 'but what will you do with your accomplishments? What, with the largest portion of your mind – sentiments – taste?' – reflect his own sense of unfulfilled ambition (450). While she agrees with the hierarchy implicit in his suggestion that being a governess to a good family is 'better' than a school-teacher to 'cottager's children', her unconscious snobbery is subdued by her fierce desire to keep herself. When Jane does begin to rupture his reserve, he admits a desperate desire to become a missionary, framing it as a personal challenge that will allow him to develop his strengths in a role he says combines 'the best qualifications of soldier, statesman and orator' (457). As these worldly positions suggest, St John is driven by ambition rather than love of his fellow man, not something we would expect a clergyman to be without. Brontë subtly exposes the hypocrisy of a man of God who admits that 'a lover of renown, a luster after power' hides under his surplice (457). He warns her 'Know me to be what I am – a cold, hard man' and emphasizes these sentiments by repeating that in his 'natural state' he is a 'cold, hard, ambitious man' (472).

However this statement is not entirely accurate as he confesses to Jane his passion for local heiress Rosamond Oliver. She is the type of idealized figure who *Jane Eyre's* first readers would have expected to be the protagonist in a romance and the sort of character Brontë chided her sisters about producing. The narrator describes Rosamond as kind and 'exquisite' in appearance. However, she is also like 'a disappointed child' when thwarted and reminds Jane of Adèle. Summing her up, the narrator concludes: 'she was very charming, in short, even to a cool observer of her own sex like me; but she was not profoundly interesting or thoroughly impressive' (465). This critique is part of the novel's broader questioning of women's roles, in this case the captivating ingénue who is generally valued for her child-like attributes



rather than those belonging to a mature, intelligent adult. It helps explain why Brontë consciously set-out to create a romantic lead different to the norm, of whose qualities, such as rationality and strength of will, are usually to found in the male hero. That St John desires such a vapid creation as Rosamond is to his detriment although he is astute enough to describe her as the root of his 'last conflict with human weakness' (472).

Over the next few chapters, Brontë shows St John determinedly taking the intensity of his feelings for Rosamond and redirecting them into his plan to become a missionary. She also continues to contrast Jane with the usual romantic heroine, by charting her progress as a working woman and village school-teacher, a role she carries out under her assumed name of Miss Elliott. Although she at first feels degraded – 'I doubted I had taken a step which sank instead of raising me' – the older narrator says she was wrong to make such a judgement (454). Indeed, she gradually becomes used to and even affectionate towards her charges stressing to readers that rough exteriors can mask 'natural politeness and innate self-respect' (462). This comment simultaneously undermines and perpetuates the equation of economic poverty with inferiority of character, reflecting the often-ambiguous class politics of the novel. Similarly, she describes how 'I felt I became a favourite in the neighbourhood' but cannot resist the snobbish caveat, 'though it be but the regard of working-people' (462).

Although Jane is largely content by day, at night she dreams of Rochester, 'of loving him, being loved by him'. The vocational plot does not destroy the romance plot but pushes it into the background and the world of Jane's unconscious; feelings she can repress when awake surface unchecked in fantasies that are 'many-coloured, agitated, full of the ideal, the stirring, the stormy' (463). The erotic description of her dreams captures the element of excitement and passion missing from her life albeit one where she is finally her own mistress.

Chapter 33 ushers in the plot development that paves the way for Jane and Rochester's eventual reunion and abruptly switches the direction of the novel from the real into the realms of the coincidental, romantic and fairy tale. St John discovers that Jane Elliott is really the cousin for whom his dead uncle's solicitor is searching. The news that she is an heiress worth twenty thousand pounds and a legitimate member of the Rivers family firmly positions Jane as a Cinderella figure, an unloved orphan who becomes a wealthy 'princess'. Like her fairy-tale counterpart, she turns out to have been of good 'stock' all along and only 'disguised' as a servant. Jane's inheritance promotes her to Rochester's social equal. Brontë has very carefully established the ancient and respected lineage of the Rivers family in Jane's conversations with Hannah. For all Brontë's suggestions that good character is not dependent on class, she cannot resist emphasizing that the narrator is both naturally and socially suitable for her final role as Mrs Rochester.

Making plans to share the wealth with her cousins Jane emphasizes to St John that while the money is important she is even more pleased to discover a family; 'you . . . cannot imagine the craving I have for fraternal and sisterly love.' In one of those honest moments that endear her to readers, she admits that the division of the legacy is simultaneously generous and selfish as it helps to establish her independence: 'I could not forego the delicious pleasure of which I have caught a glimpse – that of repaying in part, a mighty obligation' (485). That she feels the debt she owes her cousins is 'mighty' suggests the extent to which she dislikes being beholden to anyone. She also enjoys playing with the power wealth can bring saying of her cousins: 'They were under the yoke: I could free them, they were scattered, – I could re-unite them' (483).

Brontë lays the vocational plotline to rest by retiring Jane from the labour force and returning her to the ancestral home. Women of independent means during the period did not work in the public sphere, unlike, for example, Rochester who

is still busy with estate business the day before his supposed wedding. Not only did conservative ideology conceive it as unbecoming to their station, but it was presumed that they would not want to pursue a career but return to their 'proper' job of caring for their house and family. Indeed, Jane plunges into the domestic world, preparing to 'clean down' Moor-House for her cousins' return. Her enjoyment of 'the bustle of a house turned topsy-turvey' reminds the reader of the importance Jane places on material comfort and also her delight in finally gaining a home to which she lays claim by indulging in some housework (489). Susan Meyer, in 'Colonialism and the Figurative Strategy', produces an interesting reading of this activity, suggesting that having redistributed her wealth, Jane's way of righting an economic imbalance is that she 'works literally to set her own house in order, creating a clean, healthy, egalitarian, middle-class domestic environment as the alternative to inequality and injustice' (116).

St John's lack of interest in the renovations equally suggests something about his character, reinforcing his total lack of domesticity. Noting the disdain with which he treats her efforts, Jane finally realizes that 'he had spoken the truth of himself, when he said he was cold and hard', and it is a sign of her developing maturity that she recognises 'the parlour is not his sphere' (491). Adding that 'the Himalayan ridge, or Caffre bush, even the plague-cursed Guinea coast swamp, would suit him better', the narrator's attitude towards the 'foreign' once more gets an airing. These dangerous and 'plague-cursed' destinations are placed in opposition to Moor-House's 'bright modest snugness', which in turn is a microcosm of the England that the narrator champions throughout her story (490). The narrator falls back on the typically imperialist strategy of associating with the 'foreign' those qualities that are antithetical to an idealized sense of Englishness; in this case foreignness is associated with disease, danger and remoteness.

Despite St John's undomesticated spirit, or perhaps because of it, Jane wants his approval and agrees, for example, to take

up Hindustani in order to help him practise. Looking back, the narrator explains: 'By degrees, he acquired a certain influence over me that took away my liberty of mind: his praise and notice were more restraining than his indifference' (496). While recognizing that he holds her in his 'thrall', she continues with her efforts: 'I daily wished to please him; but to do so, I felt daily that I must disown half my nature' (497). The half to which she refers is the creative, independent and erotic side and that she is willing to suppress it points to her relationship with St John possessing sado-masochistic undercurrents. He wants to mould her into his vision of a perfect missionary's wife, and she unconsciously punishes herself for having 'abandoned' Rochester.

Indeed, soon after this admission of self-censorship Jane addresses the reader to inform them that she had not forgotten Rochester and uses the language of addiction to speak of her 'craving' for news about him (498). Eventually she breaks down in front of St John who takes advantage of the situation and commands her to take a walk. Reluctantly agreeing, the narrator explains:

I know no medium: I never have known any medium in my dealings with positive, hard characters, antagonistic to my own, between absolute submission and determined revolt. I have always faithfully observed the one, up to the moment of bursting, sometimes with volcanic vehemence into the other. (499)

In her 'autobiography', this pattern of obedience followed by assertion (and vice versa) is visible from the start and captures the conflict with conformity that structures the text and the 'all or nothing' aspect of Jane's character. In terms of what is to come, the statement also readies the reader for the mutiny that must follow St John's pitiless attempts to bend her to his will.

Explaining arrogantly that he is acting as God's intermediary, St John believes he must reveal to the 'competent' their

gifts and 'offer them, direct from God, a place in the ranks of the chosen'. Jane responds: 'If they are really qualified for the task, will not their own hearts be the first to inform them of it?' (500) This question reflects a belief that was common in the nineteenth-century evangelical community, of which Brontë was aware, that an individual does not need representatives of the church to intercede between themselves and God. Although Jane's rebellious side helps her to defy the authority he possesses as a priest and a man she says: 'I felt as if an awful charm was framing round and gathering over me: I trembled to hear some fatal word spoken which at once would declare and rivet the spell' (500). St John, likened to a wizard using magic to overcome his victim, then offers one of the least romantic literary proposals ever: 'God and nature intended you for a missionary's wife.' He qualifies this with 'you are formed for labour, not for love' and finishes, 'I claim you – not for my pleasure, but for my Sovereign's service' (501). While different from Rochester's impassioned avowal in the garden at Thornfield, this declaration also has a skewed perception of Jane at its heart. Rochester viewed Jane as passionate, otherworldly and 'formed' for love, but underestimated her independent spirit whereas St John only sees her ability for self-sacrifice and diligence. St John's interpretation is the more dangerous though because he claims it is God-given and therefore inarguable.

Repeating the sentiment that when with her cousin she has to abandon forever the half of herself that deals in 'affections', she considers his proposal, indicating the aggressiveness of his claims by using a military metaphor to suggest that he 'prizes [her] as a soldier would a good weapon; and that is all' (504). Thinking about the physical side of the wedding vows, she wonders, 'Can I receive from him the bridal ring, endure all the forms of love (which I doubt not he would scrupulously observe) and know that the spirit was quite absent?' (504). Emphasizing that sex should be about spirit and not just the physical, she decides such a union would be 'monstrous' and

a 'sacrifice' for St John although the reader can see that she is projecting onto him her own feelings of repulsion.

When Jane offers to go with him as his companion, he counters with a typically Victorian and patriarchal view of marriage: 'I want a wife, the sole helpmeet I can influence efficiently in life and retain absolutely to death' (505). He does not pretend that equality is an option, stressing he wants someone to control completely. It is little wonder that Jane 'shuddered' as he spoke and the volcanic revolt, promised earlier, takes place. Driven by his insistence that he is speaking on behalf of God, she vehemently responds 'Oh! I will give my heart to God', I said. 'You do not want it' (505). Although she had been unsure as to '[h]ow much of him was saint, how much mortal' in trying to convince her he is God's mouthpiece he paradoxically reveals himself 'a man, erring as I' (506). Dealing with a mortal rather than a saint, her self-confidence rapidly returns and with it her ability to trust her judgements: 'I scorn the counterfeit sentiment you offer: yes St John, and I scorn you when you offer it' (508). The repetition of the dismissive word 'scorn' reflects her certainty that on the subject of love, a notion largely alien to St John, she is able to distinguish between a false and real offer.

Jane's reawakened sense of self-preservation is severely tested in the days that follow and chapter 35 is devoted to a description of the 'refined, lingering torture' St John inflicts upon her. His saintly and human side clash and Jane notes the struggle between the two: 'I fear the corrupt man in him had a pleasure unimparted to, and unshared by, the pure Christian.' He remains icily polite but still shows his disapproval, prompting Jane to observe that he is 'no longer flesh, but marble', a similar description to one she used for the other bullying clergyman in the novel, Mr Brocklehurst (510). Brontë continues to connect the two characters as St John also uses his daily Bible readings as a tool of control, quoting passages from Revelations that speak of 'the fearful and unbelieving' ending up in hell and 'the lake which burneth

with fire and brimstone' (517). Playing on Jane's insecurity, he implies that although she now has a home at Moor-House, if she cannot do her Christian duty she will once again be an outsider, banished to hell for eternity. The reader knows from her Lowood days that the threat of hell does not work on Jane but we also know from her relationship with Rochester that she finds words seductive.

When, following one zealous performance, St John asks Jane to 'repent' she is drawn to his sincerity: 'I was almost as hard beset by him now as I had been before in a different way, by another. I was a fool both times. To have yielded then would be an error in principle; to have yielded now would have been an error of judgement' (518). The adult narrator sees the link, this time, between St John and Rochester as two men who tempt her to take extreme paths that would have been wrong for her: Rochester to ignore conventional morality and become his mistress and St John to ignore her feelings and become his wife.

Seriously considering the 'safety and bliss' of a life sacrificed for God, Jane prays for guidance and says 'I was excited more than I had ever been; and whether what followed was the effect of the excitement, the reader shall judge' (519). What follows in this 'strange' and 'electric' atmosphere is that she suddenly hears 'a voice somewhere cry – "Jane! Jane! Jane!" Nothing more' (520). Many readers have judged this summons as too melodramatic, suggesting that it detracts from the more realistic aspects of Brontë's writing. Yet this sort of appraisal ignores the fact that the novel is permeated with the Gothic and uncanny and that the narrator indulges the irrational and intuitive at several points in the story, for example in her dreams that foreshadow subsequent events. At the start of chapter 21, the narrator explicitly spells out a belief in the preternatural with the comment that 'Presentiments are strange things! And so are sympathies; and so are signs: and the three combined make one mystery to which humanity has not yet found a key' (303). However the summons may be explained, it literally calls her back to herself

and encourages a final stand against St John: 'It was *my* turn to assume ascendancy. *My* powers were in play and in force' (520). Having explored the idea of self-sacrifice to a higher cause, Jane's continuing lust for life finally surfaces and she asserts her authority over her future.

The next morning Jane departs to find Rochester. Brontë reflects her newfound power by using an extended metaphor whereby Jane's visit to Thornfield is likened to the surreptitious approach of a lover finding his 'mistress asleep on a mossy bank' who then 'wishes to catch a glimpse of her fair face without waking her' (524). Not only is she figured male but also placed in an erotically charged situation demonstrating how her repressed sexual desire has been reawakened by thoughts of Rochester. Very Gothically, what the lover finds instead of the anticipated 'vision of beauty' is the 'stone-dead' corpse of the beloved as Thornfield now possesses 'the silence of death' and stands a 'blackened ruin' (525).

When Jane returns to the inn, its host tells her the story of the fire at Thornfield. Bertha's setting of the fire is her last desperate attempt to control her fate and destroy her prison. As the narrator's alter ego, she is demolishing a building that symbolizes a conventional and restrictive patriarchal marriage and Rochester's secretive past life. Pragmatically, Bertha's final jump from the battlements means that the only practical obstacle to Jane's marriage to Rochester has disappeared and Jane certainly shows no sympathy for her dark double's tragic end, harassing the innkeeper instead for news of Rochester. Penny Bouhelma in her discussion of the novel points out that many of the people who come into contact with the protagonist are 'burned, singed, seared' 'as if the passion of the unsatisfied Jane will consume what threatens or denies her' (1990: 76). A psychological reading would add that with Bertha gone, so too is the mother figure in the oedipal triangle consisting of her, Rochester and Jane. Mrs Fairfax gestures to this configuration when she first hears of the narrator and his engagement: 'there are twenty years difference in your ages. He might almost be your father' (350). Although the narrator



retorts 'No indeed . . . he is nothing like my father! No one who saw us together would suppose it for an instant,' the orphaned Jane can now pursue her substitute father without fear of punishment and goes to find Rochester at Ferndean (350).

### **FERNDEAN (CHAPTERS 37–38)**

The final chapters allow the narrator to conclude the romance plotline and reunite her younger self with Rochester, raising questions for the reader about the extent to which this is a happy ending. Jane's first impression of Ferndean is that it is isolated and seems part of the forest that surrounds it, 'scarce, by this dim light, distinguishable from the trees' partly because of its proximity to them but also because its walls are 'dank and green' (531). This otherworldly, almost organic, forest-dwelling stands in contrast to Thornfield with its more conventional splendours. Ferndean is characterized as part of the living and natural world whereas Rochester's former home turned out to be little more than a Gothic prison and 'vault'. One explanation for Ferndean's secluded position is that the relationship of spiritual, economic and social equality that Jane and Rochester strive to create here would not withstand the scrutiny of early nineteenth-century society with its conventional views on marriage of the sort espoused by St John when he asserted the rights of the patriarch. With Thornfield gone, Rochester is no longer the master of the manor withholding secret knowledge from Jane about his wife and the wider ways of the world.

Jane fully realizes the changes that the fire has wrought when she first glimpses Rochester who, while still in his 'vigorous prime', looked like 'some wronged and fettered wild-beast' and specifically the 'caged eagle, whose gold-ringed eyes cruelty has extinguished, might look as looked that sightless Samson' (532). She captures the sense of a once majestic and imperial creature brought low and uses the image of a bird that can no longer fly to symbolize entrapment. She also gestures to her feelings of guilt for the

part she played in his downfall by alluding to Samson who according to the Bible was blinded by his enemies after his lover had betrayed him.

Brontë emphasizes how the balance of power has shifted when Jane persuades Mary to let her carry Rochester a glass of water unannounced. In a scene reminiscent of the one in which he play-acted as the gypsy fortune teller, Jane adopts the guise of a servant in order to control the reunion, suspending both his and the reader's gratification. It is a measure of her emotion that she quickly reveals herself, stating 'I am come back to you' and covering his face in kisses (535). There is a brief moment of self-doubt when she says 'perhaps I had too rashly overleaped conventionalities; and he, like St John, saw impropriety in my inconsiderateness' (536). But, as the reader knows, their relationship is not conventional, and it is not Jane's assumptions that are misplaced but Rochester's fears about not being powerful enough for her but a 'sightless block' (537). She ignores his concerns because she is attracted to the way he differs from the norm rather than how he fits a particular stereotype of masculinity.

When telling him about her adventures over the past year, she is unable to resist describing St John as possessing perfect features 'with blue eyes, and a Grecian profile' (543). The narrator explains that her attempts to make Rochester jealous were to chase away the 'gnawing fang of melancholy' that plagues him. True as this may be for the most part, it also appears as if Jane is taking revenge for the jealousy she experienced when watching his and Blanche's presumed courtship. This is one of those places where Brontë encourages us to read between the lines as there is a gap between what the narrator says and what appears to be happening. One of the results of this strategy is that it humanizes Jane, making her more than a two-dimensional paragon of virtue.

Rochester is not only physically but also spiritually transformed. Whereas before the wedding ceremony he paid lip-service to Christian morality by begging God's 'pardon' for his forthcoming marriage but going ahead anyway, he

explains how after the fire he 'began to experience remorse, repentance: the wish for reconciliation to my Maker'. Re-establishing a relationship with God through prayer, he finally accepts the idea of divine authority. Much earlier in the narrative, Jane had suggested that 'repentance' cured remorse and at the time Rochester had disagreed but ultimately Jane is proven correct (208). Yet Brontë never suggests that she has not had to struggle with questions about what is right, and over the course of the novel both characters have their faith tested and ultimately strengthened by those tests.

At the end of this chapter Rochester admits that in his darkest hour he called out to her. In one of the most startling omissions of the narrative, Jane does not tell him about her corresponding experience. She says she is trying to protect him from melancholy thoughts 'prone to gloom' but a less generous reading of her silence sees her as manipulating both her husband and the reader (550).

The final chapter begins with one of the best-known lines in nineteenth-century literature: 'Reader, I married him' (552). Asserting her position as an active subject, the narrator with her 'I' stresses her freedom in choosing to marry Rochester (he does not 'marry her' for example). It is unusual in terms of the romance genre that space is devoted to a description of post-wedding events as the ceremony itself is usually posited as the goal of a romantic relationship. For the narrator to summarize ten years of marriage signals the narrative's continuing unconventionality as does the equality that Jane delineates, which would have been remarkable in an early nineteenth-century marriage. Her fortune allows her to feel equal to Rochester in many respects, as does the injuries he received in the fire at Thornfield, which led to a loss of sight and one of his hands.

A Freudian reading of Rochester's blinding is to see it as a symbolic castration that takes away his masculine power. Critics such as Susan Meyer point out how the 'ending of the novel severely punishes Rochester for both his figurative enslavement of women and for his acquisition of colonial

wealth' (Meyer 1997: 120). No longer the jailer, he comes to depend on her as she guides him around. Brontë reverses their roles and so where in the past Rochester had attempted to interpret Jane's experiences for her, she now reads the world for him: '[he] saw nature – he saw books through me', adding that she impressed 'by sound on his ear what light could no longer stamp on his eye'. (554) Rochester not only used rhetoric to try and manipulate Jane during their courtship but undermined their supposed parity by trying to dress her in conventionally pretty clothes and jewels. At Ferndean, because of his blindness, this is no longer an issue. Jane can dress as she pleases and does not have to fight against being objectified as something purely decorative.

One of the questions that divides readers is whether at the end of the novel the strands of rebellion dominate or is Jane's fierce individuality compromised? The narrator states that this is a happy ending: 'I know what it is to live entirely for and with what I love best on earth. I hold myself extremely blest – blest beyond what language can express; because I am my husband's life as fully as he is mine' (554). In terms of her story, she frames her decisions as right and her journey worthwhile, leading her to a position in which she is 'blest'. However, the first- person narrator necessarily offers the reader a biased viewpoint and readers learn to look beyond the 'official' account of events leading us to question whether Jane's summation is entirely true. Arguably, Jane has developed into someone who has learnt to balance the fire and ice aspects of her nature and refuses to let her life be dictated by anyone else by becoming either a submissive doll-like trophy or martyr. The fact that there is some equality in her and Rochester's relationship is revolutionary in the context of a society in which women were largely treated as second-class citizens.

However, there are moments in the final chapter that complicate the issue of whether or not Jane, because of the limited options available to the early nineteenth-century woman, has compromised her fantasy of liberation and

equality. At the start of the final chapter, for instance, she proffers the servants a present of five pounds to celebrate her marriage with the words, 'Mr Rochester told me to give you and Mary this' (552). Linguistically she places herself under Rochester's command, relinquishing her claim to economic independence and reminding readers that when a woman married in this period any property she owned automatically belonged to her husband. It was only with the Married Women's Property Act of 1882 that this in-built discrepancy was eradicated.

Fulfilling one of the most important expectations of a nineteenth-century wife, Jane provides Rochester with a son and heir although he is only mentioned in the briefest of sentences and in the context of her husband regaining his sight: 'When his first born was put into his arms, he could see that the boy had inherited his own eyes as they once were – large, brilliant, and black' (555). Her lack of discussion of her son could indicate that she has discarded another idealized female role, that of the perfect mother. Liora Brosh writes that the novel 'undermines her culture's construction of mothers as ideal and morally superior by representing women's relationships to mothers and maternal roles as troubled and complex'. Brosh summarizes Adrienne Rich's 1970s essay '*Jane Eyre*: The Temptations of a Motherless Woman' to conclude that it is the absence of a mother figure in the novel that 'liberates the heroine and enables a radical reconfiguring of gender identities' (47).

Yet, typical of this complex novel, this is only one interpretation of Jane's distancing from female figures. A more class and race-conscious stance could argue that to adopt the position of Mrs Rochester she has to abandon any connection to her 'outsider' female roles, as orphan, working-class woman, governess and mistress. To consolidate her final respectable middle-class position she must push away anything that threatens those boundaries including the racially foreign, as represented not just by Bertha but also Adèle. We are told that 'a sound, English education corrected in

great measure her [Adèle's] French defects' (553). With her flawed non-Englishness eradicated she is deemed a 'pleasing and obliging companion', ironically the sort of woman into which the younger Jane railed against being moulded.

Interestingly the novel does not end by focusing on the relationship between Jane and Rochester as its final words belong to St John in a letter proclaiming the glories of the afterlife. That Jane who is clearly keen to control the narrative should hand over the ending to another character has puzzled numerous readers over the years. Marianne Thormählen, in *The Brontë's and Religion*, offers a solution by suggesting that it is Jane's attempt to lessen her sense of guilt about her happy domesticity 'by seeming to allow that St John's noble martyrdom outshines the idyll at Ferndean' (217). The narrator does not agree with St John but does not want to denigrate his beliefs, acknowledging that they '[both] have sought and received Divine guidance and been faithful to their God-created self' (Thormählen 1999: 218). Modern readers must also remember that debates about how best to lead a Christian life were central to Brontë and her contemporaries (*Jane Eyre* was published before Darwin's theory of evolution heralded a crisis of faith for many). The switch of focus in the final chapter from human to divine love could suggest that the narrator reaches a balance between the two, something with which she has struggled since her conversations about the subject with Helen Burns.

Once again, there is an alternative interpretation that suggests Brontë is simply playing lip-service to the religious ending that some readers might have expected. There is certainly something perverse in the fact that it is not Jane who ends up testifying about her faith, suggesting that she cannot reconcile her earthly love for Rochester with leading what she would consider a suitably Christian life as exemplified by St John.

The ambiguities that pepper the final section of the novel partly exist because Brontë fashions her story from a variety of genres and the 'appropriate' ending for, say, a spiritual

autobiography, romance, or *Bildungsroman* is not necessarily the same one. The most persuasive readings of *Jane Eyre* are content to let the complexities stand and are those which, as Heather Glen suggests, 'acknowledge its ideological bound- edness' while simultaneously honouring 'its capacity still to trouble and stir' (Glen 1997:143).

## STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Write a close critical analysis of a passage of your choice. Some things to consider (see the previous chapter for help with the hallmarks of Brontë's writing):
  - style, quotations and allusions
  - the layout of the text
  - imagery and figurative language (metaphors/similes/ symbols/paradox)
  - narrative voice
  - themes
  - And finally relate the passage to the wider text, genre and historical period.

### Gateshead

1. How does the narrator describe herself as a child?

### Lowood

1. Debates about what counted as suitable education for a woman were rife in mid-Victorian England with the first women's colleges opening shortly after *Jane Eyre's* publication. What does Brontë suggest about the attitude towards female education in this section?

### Thornfield

1. Spend some time studying the description of Jane's pic- tures in chapter 3, what do they suggest about her state of mind?
2. To what extent do Jane and Rochester's courtship support or challenge notions of heterosexual romance?

**Moor-House**

1. Consider Jane's cousins Diane and Mary. What qualities do they possess that make them attractive companions for Jane? Do they exhibit any traits that are usually linked to male characters in this period?

**Ferndean**

1. There is great debate about the extent to which the novel ends on a note of rebellion or conformity. Consider both sides of the argument and explain the perspective you find most compelling.
2. Jane admits that she keeps from Rochester the fact that she heard his call – does she keep anything else from him? What does this suggest about her reliability as a narrator?



*This page intentionally left blank*

## CHAPTER 4

# CRITICAL RECEPTION AND PUBLISHING HISTORY

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter offers a sample of the most influential readings of *Jane Eyre* and points out the changing fashions in critical thought as this affects which aspects of the novel are examined. For example, in the 1970s a concerted wave of feminist activism resulted in an increased discussion of literary gender politics. In terms of *Jane Eyre*, while early readers had noted its questioning of gender stereotypes, it became for many theorists post-1970 the novel's most interesting aspect. While not every critic from a particular era will treat Brontë's work identically, readers from the same period tend to share a broad understanding about literature and its capabilities.

### PUBLICATION

The potential of *Jane Eyre*, which was written between the summers of 1846 and 1847, was quickly noted by the London-based publishers Smith, Elder and Company. Although they had rejected Brontë's first novel, *The Professor*, their encouraging comments persuaded her to send them the manuscript of what would be published only eight weeks later, on 19 October 1847, as *Jane Eyre: An Autobiography*, edited by Curren Bell. It was an instant success, the first print-run selling out in only three months and an American edition quickly followed, published by Harper and Brothers on 4 January 1848. At the same time back in England, a second edition was produced to which Brontë added a preface refuting charges that her work, with its unflattering portraits of clergymen, was anti-Christian. She wrote: 'Conventionality is not morality. Self-righteousness is not religion. To attack the first is not to assail the last.' As well

as affording her an opportunity to respond to the 'timorous or carping few' and dedicate the novel to her literary hero, William Thackeray, she also confirmed the novel was 'by' rather than 'edited by' Currer Bell, reflecting her increased confidence in the novel and its reception (Brontë 1847 b: 557). A third edition was needed a few months later, indicating its popularity and lending credibility to a claim made by Thomas Weymess Reid, some years later, that in the winter of 1847 the country was gripped by '*Jane Eyre* fever' (see Lodge 2009: 4).

It is worth noting that in each of these three editions, Brontë kept the pseudonym of Currer Bell on the front page in an attempt to ensure her privacy and encourage reviewers to judge her work on merit rather than as a piece of women's writing. She even kept her publishers in the dark as to her true identity. Perhaps unsurprisingly, instead of preventing debate, her decision had the opposite effect, intensifying conjecture as to the novelist's sex and background. It was not until the summer of 1848 that she and her sister Anne visited Smith and Elder's office in order to stop the rumour that Acton, Ellis and Currer Bell were the same 'man'. The rest of the country had to wait until 1849, and the death of her sisters, to find out the truth about the creator of *Jane Eyre* as they had been much keener than Charlotte to embrace the anonymity offered by their adopted surname, Bell.

### CONTEMPORARY REVIEWS AND NINETEENTH-CENTURY CRITICISM

*Jane Eyre* was undeniably a success with the public, on both sides of the Atlantic, and reviewers helped the spread of the 'fever' by commending both its power and originality. George Lewes, journalist and partner of George Eliot, despite finding 'the mad wife and all that relates to her' melodramatic and the writing peppered with 'too many Scotch or North-country phrases', reviewed it enthusiastically in an article written in December 1847 for *Fraser's Magazine*. Guessing correctly that Brontë was a woman writer and new to the

profession, Lewes admires her psychologically realistic ‘flesh and blood’ heroine, ability to depict places and idiosyncratic style. He praises the three volumes for being far above ‘the poor-level of street-conjuring’ that characterizes ‘trashy’ novels, and believes they successfully reach ‘the exalted region of art’ (Lewes 1847: 54). An anonymous reviewer in *The Critic* also commends the realism with which Jane is ‘sketched’, stating she is ‘not faultless but human – a woman and not an angel: on which account we feel all the more interested in her fortunes’. Highlighting *Jane Eyre*’s social critique, the writer applauds Brontë’s representation of charitable institutions ‘whose wretched fare, exacting tyranny, puritanical pretension, and systematic hypocrisy’ receive a ‘well-directed blow’ (Anon 1847: 46–47).

Interestingly, the elements of the novel that were singled out for praise were often the same ones criticized by different reviewers. Like Lewes, Anne Mozley in the *Christian Remembrancer* (1848) admires *Jane Eyre*’s strength of characterisation and recognises its authoritative style: ‘Throughout there is masculine power, breadth and shrewdness.’ However, suspecting it is written by a woman her discovery of ‘masculine hardness’ is damning rather than appreciative. She is puzzled about why a woman would write a ‘cynical’ novel that shows an ‘intimate acquaintance with the worst parts of human nature’. Adding ‘[n]ever was there a better hater’, she points to an undeniable rage in the author/narrator which might be understood, and even admired, in the twentieth-first century but during the Victorian era was not a trait expected in women (57–58).

The writer Elizabeth Rigby, in an unsigned piece in the *Quarterly Review*, dismissed the narrator as the ‘personification of an unregenerate and undisciplined spirit’ whose ‘heathen mind . . . is a law unto itself. No Christian grace is perceptible upon her’. Rigby brands the whole book ‘pre-eminently an Anti-Christian composition’. About the sex of the author, she cannot believe a female writer would make such mistakes as she points to in the depiction of Rochester’s house guests.

She indignantly states that they ‘bully the servants in a language no lady would dream of using’, a comment that highlights the extent to which Brontë was an outsider to the polite, middle-class society of which Rigby was part. Contradicting Lewes, she asserts that the novel ‘is certainly by no artist’ as ‘it bears no impress of having been written at all, but is poured out rather in the heat and hurry of an instinct.’ Rigby’s view that Brontë wrote instinctively rather than with any sort of intentional craft was one shared by the majority of critics and held sway until the mid-twentieth century (70–73).

As these responses to the novel demonstrate, the sex of the author preoccupied Brontë’s audience. Their speculations reveal the extent to which mid-nineteenth-century society had firm ideas about what constituted appropriate behaviour for women, female authors and their protagonists. Each reviewer refers to *Jane Eyre*’s power, yet this quality was widely believed as properly belonging to masculine-authored books. For a woman’s writing to be described in this way meant it was open to suggestions of coarseness and considered unnatural.

Even when Brontë’s identity was finally revealed, it did not prevent a gender-stratified culture from debating issues about what was, and was not, suitable for a woman writer to portray. The novelist Rosina Bulwer Lytton’s horrified response to a female narrator who insists on her right to passionate love reminds the modern reader of its radical aspect. In an undated letter to a friend, Bulwer Lytton complains that ‘British females’ are ‘intense men worshippers – and in their disgusting books the young ladies make all the advances, – and do all the love-making – and this flatters the hoggish vanity of English men’. Picking out *Jane Eyre* as one of those ‘disgusting books’, she labels Brontë’s dedication of the second edition to Thackeray as ‘toadying’ and part of a deliberate strategy to garner better reviews (262).

Attempting to defend Brontë and her work from such accusations, Elizabeth Gaskell’s influential biography *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857) portrays her as ladylike,

responsible and domesticated. Once critics discovered that Brontë, like her creation, had lost her mother at a young age and been a governess, they collapsed the distance between author and character, inaugurating a biographical approach to *Jane Eyre* that dominated its analysis for the next hundred years. Representative of this stance is Emile Montégut's suggestion, in an article also from 1857, that the reader of *Jane Eyre* witnesses 'the soul of Charlotte Brontë, leaving reality and forgetting the vicissitudes of ordinary life, dreams and imagines for us the life she might have had and the characters she would have liked to meet; she tells us how she would have liked to love and who she could have loved' (133).

This increasing interest in biography was one of the two major shifts in Brontë criticism that occurred in the later part of the nineteenth century. The second change was that Charlotte's writing became less fashionable while her sister Emily's work gained in popularity (Alexander 2003: 142–143). As society became less decorous and literature in the 1880s and 1890s grew increasingly morally complex, readers celebrated this aspect of *Wuthering Heights*. Nonetheless, debates inaugurated in the nineteenth century about whether or not Jane is radical or conventional, Christian or heathen would survive and even intensify in the twentieth century. Readers would continue to argue about the extent to which the novel was, for instance, realistic, with an insight into the protagonist's psychology, or melodramatic, full of unlikely coincidence and the preternatural, characterized by Rochester's summons to Jane across the miles. Furthermore, with new approaches to literature more generally came a whole different set of responses to the novel.

### EARLY TO MID TWENTIETH-CENTURY CRITICISM

Although between the two world wars, in the 1920s and 1930s, Victorian literature was generally an unfashionable subject for critics to study, there still appeared the occasional essay on *Jane Eyre*, one of which was written by Virginia Woolf and published in *The Common Reader* (1925). She finds Brontë's

writing exhilarating and intense, and praises her ability to use imagery drawn from the natural world as a 'powerful symbol of the vast and slumbering passions in human nature' (201). Nonetheless, her assessment that she 'takes us by the hand, forces us along her road, makes us see what she sees, never leaves us for a moment or allows us to forget her' is not a positive one (197). Woolf suggests that Brontë was unaware of the 'wider problems of human life' and compares her unfavourably to Leo Tolstoy and Jane Austen, who she believes tackle more universal problems. Capturing what for her is the novel's problematic specificity, she writes: 'Always to be a governess and always to be in love is a serious limitation which is full, after all, of people who are neither one nor the other' (198).

Woolf returns to Brontë in *A Room of One's Own* (1929), where she analyses the prejudices faced by female authors and the social circumstances that hinder their writing. Using *Jane Eyre* as an example, she argues that Brontë's anger, righteous though it may be, skews her prose and laments that her 'books will be deformed and twisted' as she is 'at war with her lot', which prevents her from reaching her full potential (90). Quoting the battlement speech that begins '[a]nybody may blame me who likes', Woolf speculates what would have happened to the breadth of Brontë's work had she been able to visit the places and meet the people longed for by her protagonist. Woolf concludes that Brontë knew, 'how enormously her genius would have profited if it had not spent itself in solitary visions over distant fields' (67).

Like Woolf, the influential academic F. R. Leavis valued Austen and her universality above Brontë and what he regarded as her idiosyncrasies. He authoritatively claimed that the 'great tradition' of the English novel, in his study of the same name published in 1948, was represented by Jane Austen, George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad and D. H. Lawrence. Dismissing the Brontës in a footnote, he grudgingly admits that Charlotte had some 'talent' in the 'rendering of personal experience' and that Emily was

a genius but does not include their work in his study as he finds it too individual, with no literary precedent. Leavis here illustrates a liberal humanist approach to literature, a broad label applicable to the work of Anglo-American, late nineteenth and early twentieth-century critics, who shared a belief that the best writing is moral, timeless and speaks to the 'human condition'. Leavis saw the Brontës as creators of novels that were too narrow in focus to be considered truly great.

In the late 1950s academics began to reclaim Brontë's work from suggestions that it was a literary aberration and a form of spontaneous outpouring. Stressing its technical aspects, they allowed Brontë craftsmanship and knowledge of earlier literature. Robert B. Heilman's influential essay, 'Charlotte Brontë's "New" Gothic' (1958) is part of this movement. Instead of treating her as an anomaly, who wrote in a literary vacuum, he explains that she engages with the Gothic genre (that emerged from Britain in the 1790s). However, he argues that she does not use its conventions in a straightforward manner but instead undercuts them, for instance, depicting a heroine rescuing a hero from fire rather than vice versa. In addition to adapting the genre, she takes the Gothic's ability to capture the 'extra-rational' and uses it to explore passion and those feelings that exist on a plane beyond the realms of the concrete and everyday. While earlier critics deride Brontë's use of Gothic tropes as melodramatic and unrealistic, Heilman argues that they actually help her to capture the full gamut of experience and work 'towards new levels of human reality', revitalizing the genre in the process and creating the 'new' Gothic of the essay title (197).

Similarly, in an introduction to a 1966 edition of the novel, Q. D. Leavis protests against earlier views that *Jane Eyre* was a random and 'arbitrary' composition. Instead she suggests that it is 'as deliberately composed as any novel in existence' pointing to its coherent use of imagery and symbolism, elements that she believes were missed by earlier critics who were not open to the poetry of Brontë's writing (177). David Lodge



influentially analyses this symbolism in 'Fire and Eyre: Charlotte Brontë's War of Earthly Elements' (1966). Positioning Brontë as a descendent of the Romantics, he says she shares their meticulous use of symbolism to depict the 'struggle of an individual consciousness towards self-fulfilment'. Yet she differs from her forefathers insofar as she does not hold the Romantic drive towards self-fulfilment at any cost, for Jane is 'held in check by an allegiance to the ethical precepts of the Christian code and an acknowledgement of the necessity of exercising reason in human affairs'. Lodge suggests that to capture this tension between 'passion and reason, feeling and judgement, impulse and conscience', Brontë uses symbolism based around the elements, earth, water, air and fire (110–111). A hierarchy is established that unites the book whereby '[e]arth (particularly as rock or stone) and water (particularly as ice, snow and rain) are associated with discomfort, unhappiness, alienation', and fire 'the dominant image in the novel' is 'most commonly associated with happy or ecstatic states of being', an assertion he then goes on to explore (116).

### LATE TWENTIETH-CENTURY CRITICISM

In the later decades of the twentieth century, the study of literature became increasingly informed by theory, influenced by the structuralist and post-structuralist schools of criticism that originated in France and drew on linguistics and philosophy. Many contemporary critical readings exhibit the 'basic frame of mind which theory embodies' that believes: 'Politics is pervasive / Language is constitutive/ Truth is provisional / Meaning is contingent / Human nature is a myth' (Barry 1995: 36).

To take the first of these principles, the political theoretical approaches that dominated the 1970s, such as feminism and Marxism, certainly sprang from the belief that 'politics is pervasive' and should be acknowledged in discussions of literary works (politics is used here in its broadest sense to include the social and cultural ideologies that impinge upon our lives).

Typical of this approach is Terry Eagleton's *Myths of Power: A Marxist Study of the Brontës* (1975), in which he insists that a consideration of the 'inner ideological structures of a text' is crucial to any reading. Illustrating this stance is his take on Brontë's writing: 'I read Charlotte's novels as "myths" which work towards a balance or fusion of blunt bourgeois rationality and flamboyant Romanticism, brash cultivation and genteel cultivation, passionate rebellion and cautious conformity' (4). Politicizing the novel, he approaches it through the lens of class conflict and mobility, seeing it as a 'fictionally transformed version of the tensions and alliances between the two social classes which dominated the Brontës' world: the industrial bourgeoisie, and the landed gentry or aristocracy' (4). For Eagleton, Jane pursues the 'passionate self-fulfilment' he associates with the upper classes, but not at the expense of flouting bourgeois social conventions. For a working woman, which Jane is for much of the novel, to give in to passion outside the confines of marriage would be 'ultimately self-defeating'; we need only consider the fates of Rochester's former mistresses, whom he abandons and despises, to see the sense of this comment. However, with no ties of kinship, Jane is free to 'move through the class structure' (26) and eventually arrives at her socially elevated position of Mrs Rochester, merging into a 'mythical unity' the seemingly competing discourses of bourgeois 'genteel settlement' with 'Romantic passion' (32).

Feminist interpretations of *Jane Eyre* came to dominate the late-twentieth-century critical field (often combined with Marxist and psychoanalytical perspectives). Although approaching literature from a gender-aware perspective is not an exclusively twentieth-century phenomenon, it is during this period that feminist literary criticism gathered momentum. One of the earliest feminist readings of the novel was made by Adrienne Rich in '*Jane Eyre: The Temptations of a Motherless Woman*' (1973). She characterizes Jane as a protagonist who negotiates and eventually overcomes 'traditional female temptations' such as the lure of masochism, represented by

Helen Burns, and that of romantic love to which she almost succumbs at Thornfield by marrying Rochester on conventional and patriarchal terms. Rich suggests that because Jane is motherless she actually does better at negotiating her way to maturity than those who have mothers. Institutionally powerless in patriarchal society, maternal advice is pragmatic but narrow and revolves around teaching daughters how to 'trap' a rich man. Jane instead encounters a variety of female figures, including the 'matriarchal spirit' of the moon who appears at Thornfield telling her to flee, who help her to avoid the traps that prevented Victorian women from developing their own identity.

Around this time feminist critics developed their own critical vocabulary and looked to establish a female literary tradition, as illustrated by Elaine Showalter's study *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing* (1978). Showalter reads *Jane Eyre* as part of this alternative canon and the result of Brontë's drive to 'depict a complete female identity' with a protagonist who combines both conventionally masculine and feminine tendencies: emotional strength and intelligence with tenderness and domesticity. Showalter argues that the novel is very concerned with the female body and sexuality, pointing out that events in its opening chapters coincide with the onset of puberty. Jane's punishment in the red-room, a 'paradigm of female inner space', is for Showalter part of the text's engagement with dominant ideologies of the time that believed the 'unruly' female body must be chastized. With this in mind, she points out that Brontë embodies the two 'types' of female body that dominated the nineteenth-century imagination in the characters of Helen Burns and Bertha Mason. Showalter regards Helen as an exaggerated version of 'the Angel of the House', whose sexuality is entirely subsumed to spirit, and Bertha as the 'devil in the flesh' (68), a temptress whose madness is tied to her sexual appetite, considered at the time to be one of the 'chief symptoms of moral insanity' (73). Both of these stereotypical figures, and

the extremes they represent, have to be destroyed for Jane to reach a wholeness and independence denied many of her contemporaries, a feat Showalter believes she manages by the end of the novel.

Another seminal feminist study is by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, who refer to Bertha in the title of their book, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (1979). They begin by disagreeing with the 1950s critic Richard Chase who reads *Jane Eyre* as driven by Brontë's neurotic and ambiguous fascination with sexual energy, what Chase terms a 'masculine élan' or 'a spirit of a masculine universe', which she 'domesticates' by blinding Rochester and taming his virility with this symbolic castration. For him the moral of the story is that the 'tempo and energy of the universe can be quelled, we see, by a patient, practical woman' (Chase 1957: 25). Gilbert and Gubar deny Brontë was compelled to write by a repressed sexuality and propose that *Jane Eyre* is a political text that shows Jane's 'problems' are social rather than stemming from some sort of 'Byronic sexual energy'. They argue that what shocked her contemporaries was not its portrayal of sexuality but the novel's 'refusal to accept the forms, customs and standards of society – in short, its rebellious feminism' (65). Drawing on psychoanalytical theory they discuss the 'problems she [Jane] must overcome before she can reach independent maturity which is the goal of her pilgrimage' (73). Like Showalter they see various characters as tempting Jane to act in a particular way: Bertha they read as Jane's 'truest and darkest double', her 'criminal self' (85) who she must leave behind to succeed; Rochester, with his 'loving tyranny' tries to lure her into an un-egalitarian marriage (82); and St John tempts her to follow a path of self-denial. After Rochester's physical fall and Jane's economic rise, they see the narrator as eventually obtaining a hopeful relationship 'in which the prince and Cinderella are democratically equal', even if they need to withdraw from society to the isolation of Ferndean for this to happen.

Moving into the 1980s, feminism realized it needed to face the differences between women, in terms of race, ethnicity and sexuality if they were to produce more effective social comment. At the same time post-colonial criticism began to make itself felt, exposing the Eurocentric bias of literary studies and interrogating texts' silencing or stereotyping of the colonized and non-European.

Bertha was seized upon as a key, if peripheral, figure in the novel by those interested in the novel's insight into imperial ideologies as is Gayatri Spivak in her seminal post-colonial reading, 'Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism' (1985). It begins with a typically bold statement: 'It should not be possible to read nineteenth-century British literature without remembering that imperialism, understood as England's social mission, was a crucial part of the cultural representation of England to the English. The role of literature in the production of cultural representation should not be ignored' (243). Spivak chooses *Jane Eyre*, which she calls a 'cult text of feminism', to make her point (244). She argues that, contrary to popular belief, it is not a text that speaks to and for all women, as Jane's eventual independence and social position depend on the destruction of the imperial subject Bertha who has to torch the house and kill herself so that Jane Eyre can become the 'feminist individualistic heroine of British fiction' (251).

Many critics in the 1990s were inspired by Spivak's reading, even if they modified her conclusions, as does Susan Meyer in 'Colonialism and the Figurative Strategy of *Jane Eyre*' (1990). She suggests that Brontë has a complex attitude towards imperialism as she actually critiques it, battling throughout against 'unjust hierarchies and oppression', but then 're-affirms it'. Pointing to scenes in which Jane feels tyrannized and compares herself to a slave, Meyer rightly suggests that this is a comparison built on the implicit acknowledgement that slaves are oppressed. Yet the narrator's emphasis on Blanche Ingram's dark colouring is supposed to point to her moral inferiority, suggesting that the 'British aristocracy

in particular has been sullied, darkened and made imperious and oppressive by the workings of empire' (109). Meyer writes of Brontë's attitude towards oppression that 'in any of its manifestations', it is 'foreign to the English, thus the non-white races signify oppression within England' (110). That both colonizer and colonized are damaged by these unjust systems is probably true but Brontë, by ignoring the fact that the colonized are far worse off than their 'masters' and implying the not-English are morally tainted, 're-affirms' for Meyer the ideologies that underpinned the imperial project.

Controversially Erin O'Connor, in 'Preface for a Post-Postcolonial Criticism' (2003), takes issue with post-colonial approaches to *Jane Eyre*. Questioning Spivak's assertion that all nineteenth-century novels have something to say about imperialism, she polemically likens Spivak, and those critics influenced by her, to the colonialists they claim to expose; their appropriation of the Victorian novel prevents other, more relevant, approaches from flourishing. To make her point she states: 'At the risk of sounding heretical', *Jane Eyre* has 'little to tell us about the imperial imagination' (239). The post-postcolonial criticism mentioned in the essay's title would use theory to interpret the novel and not the other way around, as O'Connor feels has recently been the case in Victorian studies.

### CRITICAL RESPONSES TODAY

O'Connor's essay brings us into the twenty-first century and is proof that *Jane Eyre* remains a text around which a healthy critical dialogue exists. Current readings of the novel are relatively diverse in their perspective, although Sara Lodge, in her book about critical responses to *Jane Eyre*, suggests that a broad connection between them is a 'new interest in the novel's relationship to nineteenth-century social and cultural history' (125). This historicizing of the novel has its roots in the 1980s and the work of the British cultural materialists and American new historicists. Taking a stand against ahistorical approaches to literature, they argued that texts were

best understood in relation to their historical context, and used strategies such as reading non-literary texts next to literary ones in order to shed light on both.

Studies that consider *Jane Eyre* in dialogue with ideas of the time include Marianne Thormählen's *The Brontës and Religion* (1999) and Heather Glen's *Charlotte Brontë: The Imagination in History* (2002). As well as considering Brontë's upbringing as an evangelist, both turn to religious tracts, autobiographies, prayer books and so forth to establish the religious and cultural climate of the day and the novel's commentary on it. Sally Shuttleworth's *Charlotte Brontë and Victorian Psychology* (1996) discusses Brontë's use of phrenology in characterizing her protagonists. While this has been noted over the years, Shuttleworth goes back to study the writings of the period to suggest that, although we may dismiss the discipline now, it was part of a wider attempt to think about psychology and how the mind worked. She stresses that it was particularly attractive to women and the socially marginalized more generally, as it allowed people to be judged unrelated to their class and gender. On these terms you would have been permitted, for instance, to be a working-class woman with a well developed 'faculty' for learning, challenging ideologies that tied intelligence to masculinity.

One final mention of a study of *Jane Eyre* that illustrates how challenging readings continue to be produced, is Lisa Sternlieb's '*Jane Eyre*: 'Hazarding Confidences' (1999). Aiming to 'defamiliarize a heroine who has engendered a profound but false sense of intimacy with her reader', she frames the narrator as unreliable, a shadowy character who seduces the reader into believing her and who is constructing a revenge narrative to expose Rochester's ill-treatment of the women in the text (455). That it is not meant for his eyes, Sternlieb surmises from the fact that Jane tells us she will not mention hearing his call (allegedly to protect his morbid mind) and so cannot be planning to show him her tale. Sternlieb believes that Jane, by withholding confidences from him and controlling

both of their stories, has eventually gained the upper hand in their relationship.

As this has been a representative survey of *Jane Eyre* criticism, it touches upon a relatively small amount of the material that is available, both on the novel and the Brontës more generally. With this in mind, the 'Further Reading' section of this guide includes essays that were not directly referred to in this chapter for those who want to read more widely.

### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. First published under a pseudonym, *Jane Eyre* caused much speculation as to whether it was written by a woman or a man. To what extent is writing gendered? Do you think it is clear that the author is female? Support your answer.
2. As this chapter has demonstrated *Jane Eyre* has been subject to a variety of critical approaches including liberal humanist, Marxist, feminist and post-colonial. Choose a couple of these approaches and summarize their conclusions. Which of the perspectives do you find most compelling and why?
3. When the sisters' *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey* were first published it was suggested that they were written by the same person, 'because the features which made their work similar to each other were the same ones that set them apart, in the critics' opinion, from the run of ordinary novels' (Alexander 2006: 134). What might these features be? You could begin by comparing the plot and opening pages of each of the novels.



*This page intentionally left blank*

## CHAPTER 5

# ADAPTATION, INTERPRETATION AND INFLUENCE

### INTRODUCTION

This section of the guide considers *Jane Eyre's* afterlife and how it has passed into our culture instigating a variety of creative responses. It has become a classic of women's writing and the nineteenth-century novel more generally. One of the ways in which its canonical status is signalled is by its inclusion in a multitude of academic courses. But it is clearly not just a book that belongs to the universities as it resonates with readers of a variety of ages and from very different backgrounds. Its enduring hold on the cultural imagination can be pointed to by the fact that it continues to do well in literary polls. For instance, in a survey carried out in 2006 for World Book day about the novel thought to have the perfect ending, it finished in third place and Rochester topped the poll when Mills and Boon canvassed its readers for their favourite literary hero in 2009.

That *Jane Eyre* and the Brontës more generally inspire loyalty in their readers is demonstrated by the popularity of the Brontë society which today has 1,700 members. It dates back to 1893 and a meeting held in Bradford's town hall. The society's profile was enhanced when a local benefactor presented them with Haworth parsonage, which they officially opened as a Brontë museum in 1928 to huge crowds and it continues to draw around 75,000 visitors every year. The Brontës' international appeal is indicated in the fact that relatively recently societies have emerged from Japan (in the 1980s) and Australia (in the 1990s).

The lives of the Brontës garner almost as much attention as their writing, and autobiographical studies have appeared in

a steady stream since Elizabeth Gaskell inaugurated the trend with *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857) as discussed in Chapter 1 of this guide. Versions of their lives have appeared on the stage, with Alfred Sangster's melodramatic *The Brontës* alone staged 20 times between 1933 and 1988 (Miller 2001: 142). In Hollywood's hands, the siblings were captured in the film *Devotion* (1946) with Olivia de Havilland playing Charlotte. The director Jack Warner creates a fictional love triangle where Emily loves Nicholls who in turn pines for Charlotte. In reality he knew Emily very little as she would usually retreat to her room when he visited Haworth (Miller 2001: 144). European cinema takes a different approach and in André Techiné's *Les Soeurs Brontë* [The Sisters Brontë] (1979) the siblings, played by a trio of beautiful actresses, are defined as artists of different types with Charlotte portrayed as driven by fame, Emily as the genius and Anne the crafts-person. Each version of their lives that is aired offers a different take on the autobiographical details that exist constantly making them relevant to the next generation.

Returning to *Jane Eyre*, countless authors and directors have turned to the novel for imaginative inspiration, making it impossible to produce an exhaustive chapter on the subject. As well as being adapted in a variety of media, it has been cited as an influence by scores of writers. What appears here is a review of some of the most well-known or thought-provoking responses to the novel from the century and a half since its initial publication with the best adaptations offering us new insights into the original text.

## STAGE ADAPTATIONS

Due to *Jane Eyre*'s instant popularity, it was not long before adaptations of it were appearing on the Victorian stage. *Jane Eyre, or the Secrets of Thornfield* by John Courtney was first performed in 1848, the year after the novel's publication. Brontë knew about the production at the Victoria Theatre in London but never saw it staged. On the other side of the Atlantic John Brougham's version of the novel was written in

1849 and performed in New York in 1856. Like many of the nineteenth-century productions that followed, Brougham emphasized the novel's more melodramatic elements such as Jane as the innocent tested and tormented by obvious villains such as Brocklehurst and the Ingrams.

Patsy Stoneman in *Brontë Transformations* (1996) suggests that the dramatic genre of melodrama is generally radical in terms of its critique of social injustice and class while being more conventional in terms of gender (14–16). Brougham's play follows this pattern as it expands upon the scene in which the Ingrams denigrate governesses as a 'race' while Jane watches silently on. Class tensions are emphasized as Brougham represents her engaging with their comments and standing up for herself and governesses in general. She represents here the popular melodramatic figure of the poor but moral protagonist challenging the corrupt upper class. However, in terms of gender the play is far more orthodox. Rochester is positioned as Jane's protector. For example, when Blanche's brother Lord Ingram, asks him to send her away from the room as his mother 'dislikes the atmosphere of a domestic'. Rochester directly defends her, which he never does in the novel, stating that the 'instructress of my child, my lord, ranks among the foremost of my friends, my acquaintances need not blush to be in such society'.

As the century advanced Jane is increasingly represented in stage adaptations as in need of masculine protection, an element largely alien to the novel but one that reflects the dominant ideologies of the day concerning the 'proper' relationship between men and women. That man should be active and woman passive is emphasized in one version, which totally reverses a scene from Brontë's original and has Rochester rescuing Jane from the burning bed torched by Bertha (Stoneman 1996: 38). Reaching the 1890s, there was brief decline in the novel's popularity and it is the only decade since *Jane Eyre's* publication in which no major stage adaptation was performed in Britain or America. Partly this is because the story appeared staid compared to the more

morally complex tales that were being read and placed on the stage at the time.

Moving into the twentieth century, despite some proponents of 'high culture' denigrating Victorian literature as overtly smug and materialist, the public showed a renewed interest in Brontë's novel. During this period, Helen Jerome's *Jane Eyre: A Drama of Passion* was performed in Britain (including a television version in 1937). An American tour of the production saw Katherine Hepburn play Jane to great critical success. The actress's well-known feminism helped to emphasize the more radical aspects of the play although she eventually left the role because Jerome would not agree to revise some of the dialogue she disliked.

The novel's underlying feminism was focused upon by a variety of stage adaptations in the latter half of the twentieth century. In the 1980s Fay Weldon, author of, most famously, *The Lives and Loves of a She-Devil* (1983) wrote an adaptation that foregrounds the tension that permeates Brontë's novel between Jane's romantic impulses and her desire for independence. Weldon later revised the script and introduced life-size dolls to act as the Lowood students, emphasizing the way in which Victorian women were expected to be silent and docile (Stoneman 1996: 204). Polly Teale's *Jane Eyre*, first staged by the Shared Experience Company in 1997, has Jane played by two actors in order to capture the dual nature of her personality. One is to be dressed conventionally and represents Jane's social face or as Teale describes it, her 'sensible, frozen' self. The other actress represents Jane's private rebellious side signalled by her wild hair and ripped red costume, the colour that recurs throughout the novel and symbolizes her anger. At Thornfield this actress plays Bertha and so Teale makes explicit the idea of Bertha as Jane's double, her other self who is 'passionate and sensual' (Teale 1998: 3–4).

Most recently there have been a number of musical responses to the novel. *Jane Eyre*, an opera written by Michael Berkeley, was first performed in 2000 at the Cheltenham

Festival and focuses on the Thornfield portion of the novel (Alexander 2003: 356–357). Paul Gordon's *Jane Eyre: The Musical*, staged in New York in 2000 and London in 2008, incorporates the feminist aspect of the story up to a point. He includes the battlement scene in which Jane rails against 'stagnation' and 'too rigid a restraint' but moves it to the Lowood section of the tale. In her capacity as teacher, Jane sings it to the pupils. This repositioning of Jane's speech against patriarchal restrictions undercuts the strength of the feminist message. It appears that she is railing specifically against Lowood as an institution whereas in the novel Jane is damning the whole of patriarchal society, reminding us just how radical Brontë's text was and remains (Weltman 2008: 308).

### INCREMENTAL LITERATURE

It is difficult to think of another nineteenth-century novel than *Jane Eyre*, apart perhaps from *Wuthering Heights*, which has inspired so many authors to take characters from the original and create new narratives around them. Stoneman uses the useful term 'incremental literature' to describe this type of writing, 'which builds on a previously existing text, without defining the nature of that relationship. It includes stories of what happens *before* the originating text', 'stories which are "missed" out of the original', 'stories of marginal figures' or 'a new perspective on known events' (239). Literature of this sort illustrates the idea that a single text is built from a tissue of competing viewpoints and voices but necessarily, for the sake of coherence, some characters are gagged. Authors approach these silences and creatively imagine the hidden stories. In terms of *Jane Eyre*, a distance of over a hundred years allows writers to introduce potentially more subversive suggestions than Brontë, which is certainly the case with one of the most famous examples of incremental literature, Jean Rhys' prequel *The Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966).

Although it is expected that texts which rewrite a canonical narrative will rarely be of the same quality as the original,

Rhys' novel is an exception. *The Wide Sargasso Sea* is intelligent and evocative enough to have become a classic of women's and postcolonial writing in its own right. The novel tells the story of Bertha, or Antoinette as Rhys suggests is her name before Rochester labels her with an anglicized one. By placing her at the centre of the story and telling events from her perspective, Rhys is demonstrating the post-colonial strategy known as 'writing back'. Recounting the processes of colonization from the perspective of the colonized strips them of the civilizing rhetoric often used to justify the imperial mission. Instead what is exposed is the economic background and often violent consequences of the project.

*The Wide Sargasso Sea* is divided into three sections the first of which is narrated by Antoinette and tells of her childhood. She is neither colonized nor colonizer but a liminal figure who, as the impoverished daughter of an ex-slave owner, neither belongs to the black community or rich white society, until her mother's ill-fated remarriage. Rhys implicitly draws out the similarities between Antoinette and Jane in terms of their loneliness and desire for love and acceptance. The second section of the story is narrated by a young and naïve Rochester, lured to the West Indies by Antoinette's stepfather and a promise of a fortune. Although not evil he does not understand her or the island and gradually comes to find them both alien and oppressive. Rhys expands on the self-hatred Rochester hints at in Brontë's novel and makes it clear that he feels he has sold himself. Increasingly bitter, he uses his patriarchal power to punish Antoinette, labelling her mad and taking her to England.

The last brief section covers Antoinette's time at Thornfield and her narrative is fragmented, filled with memories and confusion about as to why she is locked away. Rhys' novel makes it explicit that it is those with power who decide what constitutes irrational behaviour and in a patriarchal society this tends to be rich, white men such as Rochester. While it draws upon Brontë's radical portrait of the domestic space as

potentially a prison and asylum for its female inhabitants, it also exposes her conservative imperial ethos. It is not just the fact of Antoinette's gender but also her Otherness in terms of ethnicity that attributes to her the label of madwoman. Rhys' work emphasizes how in the original Jane is positioned as the rational subject and that before a suitably 'sane' conclusion can be reached Brontë 'must first kill off the threat posed by the other woman and the madness of foreign worlds she represents' (Purchase 2006: 96).

Rhys' sympathetic rendering of Antoinette is so powerful that many readers find that it irrevocably changes the way they approach *Jane Eyre* or at least how they think about the character. It has been adapted in its own right in a film *The Wide Sargasso Sea* (1992). Directed by John Duigan, it is a faithful rendering of the story that draws out the landscape's menace and Antoinette's longing that Rochester fails to understand.

Other texts interested in madness and the relationship between Jane and Bertha include Clare Boylan's alternative ending for the novel written for a competition run by *Good Housekeeping* magazine in 1990. Boylan revives the vocational plot that Brontë abandons in favour of the romantic one and imagines Jane realizing that she too could potentially be a candidate for the 'attic' and so heading off to join St John in India. Hilary Bailey's *Mrs Rochester: A Sequel to Jane Eyre* (1997) also positions Jane as fearing madness, driven by a cold Rochester's mysterious absences and jealousy of Céline Varens who reappears on the scene. Both writers use the ambiguity inherent in the Brontë's superficially 'happy ending' to emphasize Rochester's cruelty to women and highlight his part in confining Bertha and driving her mad.

Other marginal figures who have formed the basis for novels include Richard Mason in Robbie Kydd's *The Quiet Stranger* (1991). The narrative focuses on Mason and his affair with a slave and his role at Thornfield plays a small part of the overall story. Kydd portrays Jane as a gold-digger and Bertha in her youth is a dashing and confident figure who



runs a plantation, very different to Rhys' Antoinette. Emma Tennant's *Adèle* (2002) also considers a story 'missed out' of *Jane Eyre*, focusing on Adèle's life before and after Thornfield and investing her with more sensitivity and fire than is attributed to her in the novel.

Writers are obviously still turning to the story for inspiration and this is partly because the neo-Victorian novel remains much in demand in the twenty-first century. Explanations for readers' enduring interest in this period include nostalgia for an age that appears more certain in its ideologies. Also so many things that emerged in the nineteenth century, from gay culture through consumerism, remain central to contemporary society and so we continue to communicate with the age (Hargreaves 2000: 285).

#### LITERARY INFLUENCE

Recognizing literature that responds directly to *Jane Eyre* is more straightforward than deciding which works it has influenced. Texts are undoubtedly in a dialogue with one another but trying to pinpoint exact connections is often difficult. Some authors admit their debt to Brontë and in the absence of such a confession it is possible to point to certain books as sharing enough similarities to *Jane Eyre* that a claim can be made. Nineteenth-century works as diverse as Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* (1855) to Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw* (1898) have been linked to Brontë's novel. Gaskell's heroine, for example, finds herself drawn into an often antagonistic relationship with the brusque hero from a different class while James draws out even further the Gothic possibilities of the governess's alienated position to portray one haunted by a house's secret.

The author and critic Margaret Oliphant discussed the rash of *Jane Eyre*-like heroines in a *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* from 1855. Appraising its impact on 'novel making', she says that it 'remains one of the most remarkable works of modern times' and adds that the 'most alarming revolution' has followed its 'invasion' (118). Oliphant blames

Brontë for inaugurating a style of writing that depicted relationships as a battleground. Looking back she says: ‘Nobody perceived that it [*Jane Eyre*] was the new generation nailing its colours to its mast.’ Brontë is placed at the vanguard of a group of authors who created feisty, battling heroines and Oliphant humorously warns an ‘unhappy gentleman’ involved with one of these characters that she ‘is not an angel. In her secret heart she longs to rush upon you, and try and grapple with you, to prove her strength and equality . . . do not insult her with your respect and humility, this is something more than she can bear’ (120). As this last comment suggests, Oliphant is dubious about the equality she sees depicted in *Jane Eyre* which she regards as allowing men to be less chivalrous and she blames the novel for encouraging this sort of thinking.

The feisty heroine certainly was a stock figure in the sensation novels of the 1860s, which combined elements of the Gothic and melodrama to produce stories in which madness, cruelty and adultery abounded. Female protagonists needed to be psychologically capable in these narratives as the domestic spaces they represented were anything but a safe environment. While Brontë’s work did not directly spawn this genre, which includes novels such as Wilkie Collins’ *The Woman in White* (1860) and Mary Elizabeth Braddon’s *Lady Audley’s Secret* (1862), it would have helped to incite an appetite in the reading public for such stories.

Moving into the twentieth century perhaps the most well-known of the modern reworkings of *Jane Eyre* is the Gothic romance *Rebecca* (1938) by Daphne du Maurier. The novel opens with the line, ‘Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again . . .’ as narrator returns to the ruins of her old home that a fire had destroyed, instantly connecting her to Jane and her return to an incinerated Thornfield. Both texts are modelled on a Bluebeard scenario whereby a younger woman, in each case the narrator, becomes involved in a relationship with an older and wealthier man who hides a dark secret. They also both possess a disruptive double, as du Maurier’s narrator is

haunted by the thought of Rebecca, her husband Maxim's first wife. Like Bertha before her, she is figured as a sexually confident figure whose husband labels monstrous because of her sexual appetite and refusal to tone down her more passionate side. Maxim cannot publically declare Rebecca mad, she is too visible a presence in the community, but after her accidental death, he effectively shuts away his memories of her, keeping the narrator in the dark as to her true nature.

Du Maurier clearly draws out Brontë's anxiety about the marriage plot. She similarly concludes that as an institution it only becomes non-exploitative for women once severed from its social moorings. Jane and Rochester are happy in the woods at Ferndean and Maxim and the narrator have more of a chance of equality once away from Manderley with all its links to patriarchal status and tradition. Although both authors position marriage as a 'reward' for the narrator, they have to go to great lengths to level out the inequalities built into a relationship where the male character has so much more power than the female one. Maxim, like Rochester, not only loses his ancestral home but it is also implied that he was blinded in the fire, suggestive of a symbolic castration. The similarities in the conclusion gesture to the fact that very little changed for women in the hundred years between the novels' publication.

Despite *Jane Eyre's* explorations of the limitations of heterosexual romance, it is often pointed to as the model for its 'illegitimate offspring' (Miller 2006), books from the publishers of romantic fiction Mills and Boon and its American counterparts, Harlequin and Silhouette. Janice Radway discusses these texts, and their predominantly female readership, in her feminist study of the genre *Reading the Romance* (1984). She suggests that there are a series of 13 steps that recur in popular romance beginning with the insecure, adolescent heroine meeting an 'aristocratic male' to whom she reacts antagonistically. After a series of misunderstandings and a period apart, the couple are reunited and the heroine

reaches maturity as a wife and potential mother, as happens in *Jane Eyre*.

The limitations for women inherent in such narratives are clear as adult identity appears entirely concomitant with a heterosexual relationship, but Radway identifies a more subversive side to the genre that is often overlooked. She argues that denigrating romances out of hand is part of a larger movement whereby female activities are labelled puerile or ridiculous. She offers more productive ways of approaching the genre stressing the fact that, for instance, readers of romance use it as a way of making time for their own interests away from the demands of family life. On a psychological level, Radway suggests that by identifying vicariously with the heroine they can experience feelings of nurturance and attention that are scarce or lacking in their own lives, a reading that can be applied to Brontë's work and helps to further explain its appeal.

Nevertheless it is not just *Jane Eyre*'s romantic elements that draw readers, as many of us first come across the book as a young adult when it is Jane's endurance at Gateshead and Lowood that is the novel's most memorable feature. In this context she is the archetypal independent heroine who refuses to compromise and eventually is accepted for who she is, a role model or at least a reflection of the reader when feeling unlovable and alienated. To this end she is cited, albeit briefly, as an inspirational figure in such coming of age books as Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969) and Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges are not the Only Fruit* (1985). These two texts, an autobiographical account of an Afro-American girl's childhood in the deep south and a novel about a girl growing up in a religious community and recognizing her lesbianism, demonstrates that Jane's story can transcend barriers of sexuality and race as well as time.

More recently the prolific British writer Jacqueline Wilson, children's laureate from 2005 to 2007, has created a number of outsider characters who turn to *Jane Eyre* for inspiration

about how to survive in hostile circumstances. Wilson is vocal about her love of the novel, naming it as one of the favourites to which she regularly returns. In her book for young adults *Love Lessons* (2005) she depicts the home-schooled fourteen-year-old Prue imagining Jane as her friend and soul mate. Each protagonist has to deal with stern patriarchs – Prue's father is a strict bully – and finds solace in a relationship with an older man; Prue develops a crush on her married art teacher when finally allowed to attend a local school. Her feelings are briefly reciprocated, but Wilson does not allow the relationship to develop as the teacher realizes it is inappropriate. Furthermore unlike Jane, Prue does have a family to care for her, however dysfunctional.

### SCREEN ADAPTATIONS

The novel has been adapted many times for both the big and small screen since early film makers, who often turned to literary classics for their stories, were first inspired by Brontë's heroine. A silent feature was produced in Italy in 1909 and a score of others followed before the first 'talkie' appeared in 1934 directed by Christy Cabane (Stoneman 1996: 263).

Robert Stevenson's *Jane Eyre* (1944) in which Orson Wells stars as Rochester and Joan Fontaine plays Jane remains a classic of Hollywood cinema. It focuses on the romantic elements of Brontë's novel as its tag line suggests: 'A love story every woman would die a thousand deaths to live!' Stevenson creates a heavily Gothic atmosphere with sets almost constantly wreathed in mist and a castle-like Thornfield, complete with crenulated battlements and a tower that houses Bertha. He ignores the whole of the Moor-House section and so eradicates any sense of the story as about vocation and independence. Fontaine plays Jane as a subservient, fed ideas of duty at Lowood by Dr Rivers, an amalgamation of Mr Lloyd and Miss Temple, and washing Rochester's feet on their first meeting. Fontaine interestingly had already played the narrator from du Maurier's *Rebecca* in Alfred Hitchcock's

screen adaptation of the same name (1940), further emphasizing the links between the two texts.

Stevenson's decisions about what to include and exclude can be directly tied to the period in which the film was made. In the Second World War conventional gender roles were necessarily challenged as women were needed in the workplace. While they were encouraged to come into the public sphere, there was simultaneously a great deal of anxiety about what that would mean to the family and ideas of motherhood. Liora Brosh in *Screening Novel Women* (2008) suggests that the film 'reinscribes the novel with this new maternal theme' and worked to remind the viewer that marriage and motherhood were still the order of the day (51). For example, Bessie is much more maternal in the film than the novel presenting Jane with a brooch that she wears throughout the film. Adèle also has a much bigger role and is kept to the fore of the narrative. The final shot shows Rochester and Jane holding their baby on the ruins of Thornfield reinforcing their status as a nuclear family. The fact that they are a couple who have been separated but are reunited must have appealed to a wartime audience who would have often been separated from their partners for long periods of time.

Franco Zeffirelli's *Jane Eyre* (1995), with William Hurt and Charlotte Gainsbourg as Rochester and Jane, keeps much closer to the events of the novel in the sections it chooses to cover but like Stevenson's film it does not venture onto Moor-House territory. Zeffirelli prefers a stark and muted realism to the Gothic and so creates a kinder, less brusque, Rochester who shows concern for Adèle and Bertha, played as distracted rather than the deranged individual of Brontë's tale. Although at Lowood the young Jane, played by Anna Paquin, demonstrates her rebellious side by standing up to Brocklehurst, Gainsbourg characterizes the adult Jane as grave and reserved. A shared problem for stage and screen adaptations is how to express the narrator's passionate side that in the novel she largely only reveals to the reader and latterly Rochester. Stevenson overcomes this by having

Fontaine use a voice-over to express Jane's thoughts but Zefferelli does not and so Gainsbourg makes too demure a Jane for many fans.

This film is partly a result of the burgeoning English cinematic interest in costume drama that began in earnest in the 1980s with *Chariots of Fire* (1981) and was followed by a spate of adaptations of literary material including *Wuthering Heights* (1992). Critically there are mixed reactions to the genre in terms of whether it is radical or conservative. In a gender context, costume drama offers a cinematic space for the exploration of what are traditionally regarded as 'female concerns', such as the family and personal relationships. These types of film provide an antidote to the testosterone fuelled blockbusters that have dominated the cinema since the 1980s and address values that are important to people. However, they are often conservative and promote concepts such as the nuclear family and heterosexual relationships at the expense of different sorts of lifestyles. To do so they have to represent an unrealistically white-washed portrait of the past and its literature, ignoring its darker aspects. Films that are linked to the horror genre such as Allan and Albert Hughes' Jack the Ripper-based story *From Hell* (2001), starring Johnny Depp, might nod to the prevalence of prostitution and drugs in Victorian England but in most costume drama this is firmly out of bounds. Adaptations of *Jane Eyre* illustrate this sleight of hand as Bertha's insanity is reduced to a plot device that prevents Jane's marriage taking place.

*Jane Eyre* has had an equally interesting and varied history on television. In America the station Studio One, for CBS, produced an adaptation of the novel that starred Charlton Heston as Rochester in 1949. On the other side of the Atlantic, the BBC has produced a series of *Jane Eyre* every decade since the 1950s. The 1997 version appears a great favourite, at least on internet chat-rooms where an adaptation's fidelity to the novel is a hotly debated topic. Samantha Morton played Jane as neither too confident nor reserved and Ciaran Hind's

Rochester captured both the surliness and the humour of Brontë's hero.

In the BBC's most recent series, first aired in 2006, the director Susanna White focuses on the romance of the story at the expense of the Gothic. Ruth Wilson's Jane is very much a twenty-first century take on the protagonist. She is a more relaxed and less angry character than in Brontë's novel and has a flirtatious relationship with the relatively young and handsome Toby Stephens who plays Rochester. In keeping with contemporary attitudes towards sexuality, White emphasizes the novel's latent eroticism particularly in Rochester's confessions about his former relationships filmed as a series of flashbacks where he looks either love-sick or smouldering. After the cancelled wedding Stephens' Rochester tries to persuade Jane to stay with him by catching her in a passionate but tender embrace.

Serials made for television have the opportunity to include more of the story than a film because they have longer periods of time with which to play. White's series, for example, was broadcast in four parts each an hour in length compared with a film that might run for around two hundred minutes at most. Therefore she has time to include Jane leaving Thornfield, reaching Moor-House and becoming the village school-teacher. She is allowed to demonstrate her independence but it is much less of a hard-fought-for thing than in the novel, fitting for an adaptation screened to an audience who would expect a young woman to work for a living. St John, as in the original, feels passionately for Rosamond but overcomes his ardour to later ask Jane to be his wife. However, he does not try to persuade her using religious rhetoric and although stern lacks the sadistic side that makes him so formidable an obstacle in the book. Lucasta Miller, in an article on the series for *The Guardian* titled 'Prim and Improper', suggests that Jane's appeal to 'post-feminists' is that they see her as like themselves, self-reliant but, guiltily, susceptible to those men who cannot commit and are the antithesis of the



so-called sensitive new man (22). If this is the case, it suggests that the novel's conservative message about female anxiety regarding relationships still prevails while its more radical one, the appeal for a broader understanding of womanhood which does not prioritize 'catching a man', is less acknowledged. However, as this chapter has shown creative responses to *Jane Eyre* constantly evolve and so we should expect the next generation of writers and producers to choose to emphasize something different again from Brontë's enduring novel.

### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Create your own piece of incremental literature in which you either rewrite a particular event from a different perspective or expand on the story of one of the marginalized figures.
2. In adapting novels for a film screenwriters necessarily have to leave out a considerable amount of material. Imagine you are adapting *Jane Eyre* for the cinema. What or who would you omit and why?
3. Some adaptations of older literary texts take the story away from its original setting and place it in a more modern one. To what extent would it be possible to place *Jane Eyre* in the twenty-first century? What are the advantages and disadvantages of such an approach?
4. Find a few different screen versions of *Jane Eyre* to compare (perhaps focusing on the same scene). What aspects of the characters are the actors drawing out? Is the setting what you would imagine? How would you have done it differently?

## WORKS CITED AND FURTHER READING

Note on the edition of *Jane Eyre* used in this guide.

Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. 1847. Ed. Richard Nemesavari. Ontario: Broadview, 2000.

As well as containing the usual introduction to the novel and chronology of Brontë's life, this edition includes more unusual letters from Brontë about being a governess and primary material relevant to imperialism and Jamaica at the time of publication.

This edition of the novel is based on the first one and includes the publisher's corrections to the original manuscript, as well as incorporating some of Brontë's later changes to wording. A text based on the first edition is attractive as it gained explicit authorial approval in a letter Brontë sent to the publishers to thank them for their work in standardizing her punctuation. Brontë scholar Margaret Smith points out that second and third editions remedy some mistakes that were included in the first but subsequently introduce many of their own (Nemesavari 55).

To avoid repetition, an annotated entry appears for each text under the chapter in which it **first** appears.

### BIOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT (FROM CHAPTER 1)

Barker, Juliet. *The Brontës: A Life in Letters*. London: Viking, 1997. Barker edits letters from the siblings to produce a concise and engaging narrative of events.

Gaskell, Elizabeth. *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*. 1857. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996. A classic literary biography which helped instigate the still-enduring Brontë myth and dominated the nineteenth-century view of Charlotte Brontë.

Gérin, Winifred. 'Introduction'. *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*. 1857. Elizabeth Gaskell. London: Dent, 1971. v–xi. Introduction to Gaskell's work by the influential twentieth-century

## WORKS CITED AND FURTHER READING

- Brontë biographer. Gérin points out the reasons for Gaskell's downbeat portrayal of Brontë's life.
- Hoeveler, Diane Long and Lisa Jadwin. *Charlotte Brontë*. New York: Twayne's, 1997. Provides a good overview of the biographical industry generated by the Brontës, as well as offering concise information about the juvenilia and a chapter on *Jane Eyre*.
- Miller, Lucasta. *The Brontë Myth*. London: Random House, 2001. Entertaining discussion of biographical interpretations of the Brontës' lives.
- Peters, Margot. *Unquiet Soul: A Biography of Charlotte Brontë*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1975. A highly readable feminist perspective on Brontë's life and career.

## LITERARY AND HISTORICAL CONTEXTS (FROM CHAPTER 1)

- Alexander, Christine and Margaret Smith. *The Oxford Companion to the Brontës*. Oxford: OUP, 2003. An encyclopaedic tome that has short entries on all things Brontë.
- Dale, Peter Allan. 'Heretical Narration: Charlotte Brontë and the Search for Endlessness'. *Religion and Literature*. 16.3 (Autumn 1984): 1–24. Discusses the tension that exists in the text between worldly and divine love.
- Eliot, Simon. 'Books and their Readers'. *The Nineteenth-Century Novel: Realisms*. Ed. da Sousa Correa, Delia. Milton Keynes: Open University, 2000. 5–39. Useful introduction to the context in which *Jane Eyre* was published in terms of the material production of books, their cost and levels of literacy.
- Harvie, Christopher and H. C. G. Matthew. *Nineteenth-Century Britain – A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. As the title suggests, an introductory overview of Britain in the 1900s.
- Purchase, Sean. *Key Concepts in Victorian Literature*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. Useful entries on a variety of subjects from the 'Age of Victoria' through 'War' plus a survey of Victorian literary genres and key approaches to the field.
- Ruskin, John. 'Extract from *Sesame and Lilies*'. 1865. *Dracula*. Bram Stoker. Ed. Byron, Glennis. Ontario: Broadview, 1998. 473–474. A short extract in which Ruskin discusses appropriate behaviours for men and women.
- Rule, Phillip C. 'The Function of Allusion in *Jane Eyre*'. *Modern Language Studies*, 15.4 (Autumn 1985): 165–171. Discusses Brontë's use of biblical allusion and argues that Jane and Rochester can be treated as an archetypal man and woman.

## WORKS CITED AND FURTHER READING

- Thomson, David. *England in the Nineteenth Century*. 1950. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991. A relatively detailed, but readable, walk through the key movements and names of the nineteenth century.
- Tillotson, Kathleen. *Novels of the Eighteen-Forties*. 1954. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971. An interesting study that discusses *Jane Eyre* within its literary and cultural context.

## LANGUAGE, STYLE AND FORM (CHAPTER 2)

- Bouhelma, Penny. *Charlotte Brontë*. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990. Expands on the idea that *Jane Eyre* need not be definitively labelled as either conformist or rebellious as Brontë allows both strands to coexist.
- Chase, Karen. 'Jane Eyre's Interior Design'. *Jane Eyre: New Casebooks*. Ed Glen, Heather. New York: St Martin's Press, 1997. 52–67. Discussion of Brontë's use of space, interiors and physiognomy in the novel.
- Heilman, Robert B. 'Charlotte Brontë, Reason and the Moon'. *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*. 14.4 (March 1960): 283–302. Discusses the appeal of the supernatural and irrational for Brontë symbolized by her use of the moon.
- Peters, Margot. *Charlotte Brontë: Style in the Novel*. Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1973. Detailed discussion of the following elements of Brontë's style: her use of emphatic adverbs, syntactic inversion, antithesis and language of the courtroom.
- Roberts, Doreen. 'Jane Eyre and "The Warped System of Things"'. *Jane Eyre: New Casebooks*. Ed. Glen, Heather. New York: St Martin's Press, 1997. 34–51. Pleasantly opinionated discussion about what strikes the reader of *Jane Eyre*, focusing on style.
- da Sousa Correa, Delia. 'Jane Eyre and Genre'. *The Nineteenth-Century Novel: Realisms*. Ed. da Sousa Correa, Delia. Milton Keynes: Open University, 2000. 87–116. Explores the variety of genres that influenced *Jane Eyre*.
- Shuttleworth, Sally. *Charlotte Brontë and Victorian Psychology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. Discusses *Jane Eyre* in terms of its use of psychological and medical discourses of the day about phrenology and competing internal energies.
- Sternlieb, Lisa. 'Hazarding Confidences'. *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 53.4 (1999): 452–479. Interesting recasting of Jane as a shadowy character who seduces the reader into a false

## WORKS CITED AND FURTHER READING

impression of intimacy and is constructing a revenge narrative to expose Rochester's cruel nature.

### CLOSE READING (CHAPTER 3)

- Craik, W. A. 'The Shape of the Novel'. 1968. *Modern Critical Interpretations: Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre*. Ed. Bloom, Harold. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1986. 7–20. Extract from longer book that discusses Brontë's use of location as a structuring device.
- Eagleton, Terry. *Myths of Power: A Marxist Study of the Brontës*. 1st edition. London: Macmillan Press, 1975. Chapter about *Jane Eyre* as read from a class-conscious perspective.
- Ellis, Sarah Stickney. 'The Daughters of England'. 1842. *Jane Eyre*. Ed Richard Nemesvari. Ontario: Broadview, 2000. 600–606. Advice for women in the 1840s about the 'proper' way to behave.
- Gilbert, Sandra M. and Susan Gubar, 'A Dialogue of Self and Soul: Plain Jane's Progress'. 1979. *Modern Critical Interpretations: Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre*. Ed. Bloom, Harold. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1986. 63–96. Influential feminist take on the novel.
- Leggatt, Judith and Christopher Parkes. 'From the Red Room to Rochester's Haircut: Mind Control in *Jane Eyre*'. *English Studies in Canada*. 32.4 (December 2006): 169–188. Applies Foucault's ideas about power to the novel, tracing a development from a tyrannical discipline to a more subtle type of control with Jane finally acting as an agent 'of the state'.
- Linder, Cynthia A. *Romantic Imagery in the Novels of Charlotte Brontë*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1978. Useful chapter on the imagery of *Jane Eyre* including Brontë's use of books and drawing to represent Jane's state of mind.
- Meyer, Susan, 'Colonialism and the Figurative Strategy'. *Jane Eyre: New Casebooks*. Ed. Glen, Heather. New York: St Martin's Press, 1997. 92–124. Sophisticated exploration of how imperialism and colonialism are treated in the novel.
- Michie, Elsie. 'From Simianized Irish to Oriental Despots: Heathcliff, Rochester and Racial Difference'. *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*. 25.2 (Winter 1992): 125–140. Interesting post-colonial discussion of *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre* that explores their complex attitudes towards the Ireland and the East.
- Nemesvari, Richard. 'Introduction'. *Jane Eyre*. 1847. Ed. Richard Nemesavari. Ontario: Broadview, 2000. 9–55.

## WORKS CITED AND FURTHER READING

- General overview of Brontë's life and some of the key themes of the novel.
- Sadoff, Dianne F. 'The Father, Castration and Female Fantasy in *Jane Eyre*'. *Jane Eyre*. Ed. Newman, Beth. Boston: Bedford, 1990. 518–535. Uses Freud's ideas about the oedipal complex and sado-masochism to explore the relationship between fathers and daughters both in Brontë's own life and as figured in the novel.
- Showalter, Elaine. 'Charlotte Brontë: Feminine Heroine'. 1977. *Jane Eyre: New Casebooks*. Ed. Glen, Heather. New York: St Martin's Press, 1997. 68–77. Extract from a larger study that discusses the tradition of women's writing. Reads *Jane Eyre* in psychosocial terms and Bertha and Helen as figures representative of certain sorts of Victorian women with whom Jane must negotiate.
- Thormählen, Marianne. *The Brontës and Religion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. Accessible explanation of nineteenth-century religious debates and Brontë's stance on the subject. It frames the evangelicalism with which Brontë was raised as positive, and reflected in the novel.

## CRITICAL RECEPTION AND PUBLISHING HISTORY (CHAPTER 4)

- Anon. 'A Story of Surpassing Interest'. 1847. *Jane Eyre and Villette: A Selection of Critical Essays*. Ed. Allott, Miriam. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1973. 46–48. Complimentary contemporary review.
- Allott, Miriam, ed. *Jane Eyre and Villette: A Selection of Critical Essays*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1973. A varied selection of extracts from early reviews and critical essays up to the 1960s.
- Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995. A concise discussion of the main strands of twentieth-century literary criticism.
- Brontë, Charlotte. 'Preface to the Second Edition of *Jane Eyre*'. *Jane Eyre*. 1847. Ed. Nemesavari, Richard. Ontario: Broadview, 2000. 557–559. Brontë's preface to the second edition in which she defends herself from criticism.
- Chase, Richard. 'The Brontës: A Centennial Observation'. 1957. *The Brontës: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed. Mc Gregor, Ian. London: Prentice-Hall, 1970. 19–33. An essay that suggests Emily and Charlotte were fascinated by masculine

#### WORKS CITED AND FURTHER READING

- sexuality and intellectualism and were not particularly radical in their outlook.
- Gilbert, Sandra and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (1979). Second edition. Yale: Yale University Press, 2000.
- Glen, Heather. ed. *Jane Eyre: New Casebooks*. New York: St Martin's Press, 1997. A collection of critical essays from the 1980s and 1990s.
- Charlotte Brontë: The Imagination in History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002. Highly readable study that demonstrates Brontë's engagement with the social and literary debates of the day.
- Heilman, Robert B. 'Charlotte Brontë's "New" Gothic'. 1958. *The Brontës: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed. McGregor, Ian. London: Prentice-Hall, 1970. 184–198. Influential essay that explores Brontë's use of Gothic and frames it as adding psychological realism to the novel.
- Leavis, Q. D. 'Introduction'. *Jane Eyre*. 1847. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966. General introduction to the text which defends it from earlier criticism that accused it of possessing a haphazard form or structure.
- Lewes, G. H. 'Reality – Deep, Significant Reality – is the Great Characteristic of the Book'. 1847. *Jane Eyre and Vilette: A Selection of Critical Essays*. Ed. Allott, Miriam. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1973. 52–56. Positive early review.
- Lodge, David. 'Fire and Eyre: Charlotte Brontë's War of Earthly Elements'. *The Brontës: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed. Mc Gregor, Ian. London: Prentice-Hall, 1970. 110–136. Explores Brontë's use of symbolism.
- Lodge, Sara. *Charlotte Brontë: Jane Eyre. A Reader's Guide to Essential Criticism*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. A comprehensive, and chronological, survey of the most influential *Jane Eyre* criticism.
- Mc Gregor, Ian ed. *The Brontës: A Collection of Critical Essays*. London: Prentice-Hall, 1970. A selection of mid twentieth-century reviews.
- Montégut, Emile. '*Jane Eyre* is the "Poetic Life" and *Vilette* is the "True Life" of Charlotte Brontë'. *Jane Eyre and Vilette: A Selection of Critical Essays*. Ed. Allott, Miriam. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1857 133–140. Reads *Jane Eyre* as a figure who carries out Brontë's secret fantasies.

## WORKS CITED AND FURTHER READING

- Mozley, Ann, 'Every Page Burns with Moral Jacobinism'. 1848. *Jane Eyre and Villette: A Selection of Critical Essays*. Ed. Allott, Miriam. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1973. 57–61. Early review that is disturbed by the novel's seditious content and anger, particularly as Mozley suspects the author is a woman.
- Mulvey-Roberts, Marie, ed. *The Collected Letters of Rosina Bulwer Lytton*. London: Pickering and Chatto, 2008. Letters from the opinionated author and social commentator.
- O'Connor, Erin. 'Preface for a Post-Postcolonial Criticism'. *Victorian Studies* 45 (Winter 2003): 217–246. Polemical essay that takes issue with postcolonial studies of Victorian novels that, to O'Connor, have little to say about imperialism.
- Oliphant, Margaret. 'The New Bellona'. 1855. *Jane Eyre and Villette: A Selection of Critical Essays*. Ed. Allott, Miriam. Basingstoke: Macmillan. 117–122. One of the first reviews to note *Jane Eyre's* feminism and its promotion of a new type of literary heroine.
- Rich, Adrienne. 'Jane Eyre: The Temptations of a Motherless Woman'. *Of Lies, Secret and Silence*. New York: Norton, 1979. 89–106. Suggests Jane's journey is an archetypal struggle for independence in a patriarchal society.
- Rigby, Elizabeth. '. . . combining such genuine power with horrid taste'. *Jane Eyre and Villette: A Selection of Critical Essays*. Ed. Allott, Miriam. Basingstoke: Macmillan. 67–74. Notoriously hostile review that condemned *Jane Eyre* as blasphemous and seditious.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 'Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism', *Critical Inquiry*. 12 (Autumn 1985): 243–261. Polemical reading of *Jane Eyre* that suggests Jane's victory is individual and not one that can be shared by Bertha at whose expense Jane gains her independence.
- Woolf, Virginia. "'Jane Eyre" and "Wuthering Heights"'. *The Common Reader*. London: Hogarth Press. 1925. 196–204. Reads the narrator as too emotional and the focus too narrow to be a truly great novel.
- A Room of One's Own*. 1929. London: Grafton Books, 1990. Polemical discussion of the difficulties faced by women writers in a patriarchal society using Brontë as example.

## ADAPTATIONS (CHAPTER 5)

- Brosh, Liora. 'Maternal Desire: *Jane Eyre*'. *Screening Novel Women*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. 45–64. Discussion



## WORKS CITED AND FURTHER READING

- of the film *Jane Eyre* (1944) in relation to its portrayal of motherhood as a response to the anxieties caused by women working in WW2.
- Brougham, John. *Jane Eyre*. 1849. *The Brontës: Texts, Sources and Criticism*. <http://faculty.plattsburgh.edu/peter.frieson>. October 2009. electronic resource with the full script of Brougham's adaptation of the novel.
- du Maurier, Daphne. *Rebecca*. 1938. London: Virago, 2003.
- Hargreaves, Tracy. '“We Other Victorians”: Literary Victorian Afterlives'. *The Journal of Victorian Culture*. 13.2 (Autumn 2000): 278–286. Summary of literary representations of Victorian England in the twentieth century.
- Higson, Andrew. *English Heritage, English Cinema: Costume Drama since 1980*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Mentions Zeffirelli's *Jane Eyre* (1995) in passing but interesting general discussion of costume drama in this period.
- Horner, Avril. *Daphne du Maurier: Writing, Identity and the Gothic Imagination*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1998. Contains a chapter on *Rebecca* as a Gothic text and discusses its use of the double.
- Miller, Lucasta. 'Prim and Improper'. *The Guardian*. Saturday 23 September 2006. 22. Article on the BBC's 2006 adaptation of *Jane Eyre*.
- Radway, Janice A. *Reading the Romance*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984. A feminist investigation into the romance genre and its readers.
- Rhys, Jean. *The Wide Sargasso Sea*. 1966. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2000. Prequel to *Jane Eyre* that focuses on Bertha.
- Stoneman, Patsy. *Brontë Transformations: The Cultural Dissemination of Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights*. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1996. A comprehensive discussion of the adaptations and influence of *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* up to the late 90s.
- Teale, Polly. *Jane Eyre*. London: Nick Hern Books, 1998. A play that draws out the connection between Bertha and Jane among other things.
- Weltman, Sharon Aronofsky. 'Victorians on the Contemporary Stage'. *Journal of Victorian Culture*. 13.2 (Autumn 2008): 302–308. Exploration of the increasing interest in adapting nineteenth-century literature for the stage.

## WORKS CITED AND FURTHER READING

### SELECT FILMOGRAPHY

- Jane Eyre* (dir. Robert Stevenson) 1944. Jane – Joan Fontaine / Rochester – Orson Wells  
*Jane Eyre* (dir. Delbert Mann) 1970. Jane – Susannah Yorke / Rochester – George C. Scott  
*Jane Eyre* (dir. Franco Zefirelli) 1995. Jane – Charlotte Gainsbourg / Rochester – William Hurt

### BBC ADAPTATIONS

- Jane Eyre* (dir. Joan Craft) 1973. Jane – Sorcha Cusak / Rochester – Michel Jayston  
*Jane Eyre* (dir. Julian Amyes) 1983. Jane – Zelah Clarke / Rochester – Timothy Dalton  
*Jane Eyre* (dir. Robert Young ) 1997. Jane – Samantha Morton / Rochester – Ciaran Hinds  
*Jane Eyre* (dir. Susanna White) 2006. Jane – Ruth Wilson / Rochester – Toby Stephens

*This page intentionally left blank*

## INDEX

- Angelou, Maya 123
- Bailey, Hilary 119
- Berkeley, Michael 116
- Bouhelma, Penny 29, 87
- Braddon, Mary Elizabeth 121
- Brontë Society 113
- Brontë, Anne 1, 3–4, 28, 77, 98, 114
- Brontë, Charlotte
- Life
- birth and upbringing 1–2
- death 5
- marriage 5
- siblings (Elizabeth, Maria, Branwell) *see also* Anne and Emily Brontë 1, 4, 5, 41, 42
- teaching career 2–3
- writing career 3–5, 97–8
- Writings
- Angria (juvenilia) 1–2, 6, 53
- Shirley* 4
- The Professor* 3, 5, 97
- Villette* 3, 4
- Brontë, Emily 1, 3–4, 77, 101, 102, 114
- Brosh, Liora 92, 125
- Brougham, John 114–15
- Bunyan, John 30
- Byron, George Gordon, Lord 25, 26, 53, 107
- Chase, Richard 107
- Collins, Wilkie 121
- Courtney, John 114
- Craik W. A. 77–8
- Dickens, Charles 7, 28–9
- Disraeli, Benjamin 8
- Duigan, John 119
- Eagleton, Terry 22, 29, 31, 57, 105
- Fairy tales 25–6, 39, 50, 81
- Fontaine, Joan 124
- Gainsbourg, Charlotte 125–6
- Gaskell, Elizabeth 4, 5, 8, 28, 100–1, 114, 120
- Gilbert, Sandra and Susan Gubar 38, 107
- Glen, Heather 93, 110
- Gordon, Paul 117
- Gothic 25–8, 37–8, 49–50, 61, 68–9, 86–7, 88, 103, 121
- governesses 2, 10, 22, 28–9, 48, 59, 115
- de Haviland, Olivia 114
- Heilman, Robert B. 103
- Heston, Charlton 126
- Hind, Kieran 127
- Hurt, William 125–6

## INDEX

- imperialism 9, 67, 70, 72–4, 82, 90, 108–9, 117–19
- James, Henry 120
- Jane Eyre*
- class 36, 44, 45, 48, 58, 76, 80–1, 92, 104–5, 115
  - Ferndean 15, 88–94, 122
  - Gateshead 15, 33–40, 62–3
  - gender 37–9, 43–5, 47–8, 50–2, 57–8, 61, 65–9, 70, 74–5, 79–80, 82, 91–3, 100, 105–9, 115–16, 120, 122–5, 127–8
  - literary influence 117–24
  - Lowood 15, 40–8, 125
  - Moor-House 15, 77–88, 124, 127
  - narrative voice 21–4, 28, 35, 62–3, 90
  - reviews 97–101, 120–1
  - sexuality 45, 55–8, 59–60, 64–5, 67–8, 72–3, 80, 84, 127
  - screen adaptations 124–8
  - stage adaptations 114–17
  - style 15–24, 35, 37, 49, 52, 54, 63–4, 71, 88, 89, 102, 103–4
  - Thornfield 15, 26, 48–78, 87–8, 116, 117
- Jerome, Helen 116
- Kydd Robbie 119–20
- Leavis, F. R. 102–3
- Leavis, Q. D. 2, 103
- Lewes, George 98–9, 100
- Lodge, David 20, 104
- Lodge, Sara 109
- Lytton, Rosina Bulwer 100
- Marx, Karl 28
- du Maurier, Daphne 121–2
- Meyer, Susan 82, 90–1, 108–9
- Millar, Lucasta 127
- Montégut, Emile 101
- Morton, Samantha 126
- Mozley, Anne 99
- Nicholls, Arthur 5, 114
- Nussey, Ellen 2, 3, 5, 14
- O'Connor, Erin 109
- Oliphant, Margaret 120–1
- Patmore, Coventry 10, 44
- Peters, Margot 16
- phrenology 55, 59, 110
- Polidori, John 27
- post-colonialism  
(*see* imperialism)
- Radcliffe, Ann 26
- Radway, Janice 122–3
- religion 10–11, 18, 30, 40, 42–3, 45–6, 79, 83–6, 89–90, 93, 97, 99
- Rich, Adrienne 105
- Richardson, Samuel 18
- Rigby, Elizabeth 99–100
- Roberts, Doreen 17
- Rhys, Jean 117–19
- Romantics 24–5, 53, 104
- Ruskin, John 9–10
- Sangster, Alfred 114
- Scott, Walter 7
- Showalter, Elaine 37–8, 106–7
- Shuttleworth, Sally 29, 55, 110
- Southey, Robert 2
- Spivak, Gayatri 108–9
- Stephens, Toby 127
- Sternlieb, Lisa 21–3, 110–11
- Stevenson, Robert 124
- Stoneman, Patsy 115, 117
- Swift, Jonathan 18, 39

## INDEX

- Taylor, Mary 2, 14  
Téchine, André 114  
Tennant, Emma 120  
Thackeray, William 4, 8, 98  
Thormählen, Marianne 10–11,  
93, 110  
Tillotson, Kathleen 6–7  
  
Walpole, Horace 26  
Warner, Jack 114  
  
Wells, Orson 124  
White, Susanna 127  
Wilson, Jaqueline 123–4  
Wilson, Ruth 127  
Winterson, Jeanette 123  
Woolf, Virginia 19–20, 101–2  
women's writing 2, 8, 38, 98,  
99–100, 102, 121  
  
Zeffirelli, Franco 125–6