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Laura Deville

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Master MEEF 2 Anglais  
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## Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, from Novel to Film: The Adaptations of R. Stevenson and C. J. Fukunaga



© “*Jane Eyre*”, directed by R. Stevenson, 1944.

© “*Jane Eyre*”, directed by C.J. Fukunaga, 2011.

Présenté par Laura DEVILLE.

Sous la direction de Madame Floriane REVIRON-PIÉGAY,  
Maîtresse de Conférences au Département d’Études Anglophones.



Laura DEVILLE

M2C MEEF

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The Adaptations of R. Stevenson and C. J. Fukunaga**



# Remerciements

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# Abstract

To address the issue of adaptation of *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë from the aftermath of World War II to our present day, I have chosen to delve into the study of the novel through Penny Boumelha's lens and to contrast it with two adaptations: one directed by R. Stevenson in 1944 and the other one directed by C.J. Fukunaga in 2011.

As defined by Penny Boumelha, the genius of *Jane Eyre* resides in the use of plots made by its author. Charlotte Brontë redefined the use of plots by intertwining them throughout her novel. Hence, there is evidence of the coexistence of the plots of romance, bildungsroman, and desire. Yet, the biases inflicted upon women and the spheres and behaviours they were supposed to embrace, resurfaces in R. Stevenson's adaptation, demonstrating that an adaptation is always a work of subjectivity. While Fukunaga's adaptation keeps the essence of *Jane Eyre*, its director nonetheless made choices of his own to fit his own agenda.

Thus, this Master dissertation aims to emphasise the choices made when creating a novel and those made when adapting it to another medium.

**Key words:** Adaptation, Bildungsroman, Desire, Women, Penny Boumelha, Plots, Romance, Victorian Period.

**Persons quoted:** C. Bazin, C. Brontë, C.J. Fukunaga, P. Boumelha, R. Stevenson.

# Résumé

Afin d'aborder la question de l'adaptation de *Jane Eyre*, écrit par Charlotte Brontë, de l'après-Seconde Guerre mondiale jusqu'à nos jours, j'ai choisi d'approfondir l'étude du roman à travers le prisme défini par Penny Boumelha et de le contraster avec deux adaptations cinématographiques : l'une réalisée par R. Stevenson en 1944 et l'autre par C.J. Fukunaga en 2011.

Le génie de *Jane Eyre* consiste à créer des intrigues novatrices qui entremêlent différents genres littéraires. Charlotte Brontë a en effet à la fois utilisé et subvertie des intrigues en les entrelaçant tout au long de son roman. Ainsi, des preuves de la coexistence des intrigues de la romance, du bildungsroman et du désir sont présentes tout au long du roman. Cependant, les préjugés dont les femmes sont affublées, ainsi que les sphères et comportements qu'elles étaient censées respecter ressurgissent dans l'une des deux adaptations, ce qui démontre que l'adaptation est toujours un travail subjectif. Bien que la seconde adaptation ait préservé l'essence de *Jane Eyre*, son réalisateur a néanmoins fait des choix qui lui sont propres et qui correspondent à ses objectifs.

Ainsi, ce mémoire de Master vise à mettre l'accent sur les choix effectués lors de la création d'un roman d'une part et de son adaptation à un autre support d'autre part.

**Mots-clés :** Adaptation, Bildungsroman, Désir, Époque Victorienne, Femmes, Intrigues, Romance.

**Personnes citées :** C. Bazin, C. Brontë, C.J. Fukunaga, P. Boumelha, R. Stevenson.

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# Introduction

Charlotte Brontë's challenge is to have aroused the interest of readers, past and present, in characters of ordinary physique, which contravened all Victorian codes.<sup>1</sup>

BAZIN, Claire. *Jane Eyre, Le Pèlerin moderne*. Ed. Du temps. Nantes, 2005.

It seems that narration might in a relatively unproblematic way reveal and restore what has been concealed and suppressed in patriarchal societies. But it is precisely here that Brontë's experiments with form and genre are of interest.

BOUMELHA, Penny. *Key Women Writers - Charlotte Brontë*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990.

Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* is not only a novel in English. It is a world work, co-existing in at least 618 translations, by at least as many translators, and spreading over an ever-extending period of years — currently 176 — into at least 68 languages.

REYNOLDS, Matthew, et al. *Prismatic Jane Eyre: Close-Reading a World Novel Across Languages*. Open Book Publishers, 2023.

Charlotte Brontë's publication of *Jane Eyre*, which emerged during a conservative and moralistic era when deviating from conventional paths was frowned upon, marks a true feat. Indeed, under a pen name that concealed her gender and shielded her from the sexist criticisms of an openly patriarchal society, she published the novel *Jane Eyre*. Through this work, she designed a bridge between two spheres within the same divided society; the private sphere reserved for women, and the public sphere, dominated by men. In her novel, she gave a voice to Jane, her protagonist, and thus to women in general, narrating her story, recounting her struggles, but also expressing her desires. It was this latter aspect that offended certain conservative minds of the Victorian era. At the time, a woman was expected to be at home, a mere puppet in the hands of her husband to whom she was expected to be devoted. Therefore, a woman openly expressing her life journey whether physical or mental, as well as her hardships sparked considerable controversy.

This *tour de force* extended beyond the English-speaking world, for whom *Jane Eyre* has become a classic; rather, the 1847 novel has garnered and continues to enjoy global acclaim. As expressed by Claire Bazin's quote, Charlotte Brontë's novel has managed to

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<sup>1</sup> *Le défi de Charlotte Brontë est d'ailleurs d'avoir forcé l'intérêt du lecteur, d'hier et d'aujourd'hui, pour des personnages au physique ordinaire, ce qui contrevenait à tous les codes victoriens.*

To avoid a breach with the text, I have translated this quotation. Unless otherwise indicated, the translations from French to English are mine. The original language will subsequently appear in italics as a footnote.

transcend countries, customs, and eras, giving rise to what can be described as the *Jane Eyre* phenomenon. This phenomenon, seemingly elusive, is what we will strive to grasp. Penny Boumelha's quote already provides us with part of the answer. Indeed, we can speculate that Charlotte Brontë's use of plots is unconventional, but in what manner? By what means, stratagems, and techniques did Charlotte Brontë unleash the enthusiasm, praises, and criticism of the entire world?

Matthew Reynolds<sup>2</sup> even uses the expression a "world work", but what should be understood by this? Are we to understand that the entire world relished the reading of the 1847 novel, or are we to comprehend that the world seized up upon it in order to create in its turn?

My master dissertation aims to explain the originality of Charlotte Brontë's novel and will attempt to determine how the novel was groundbreaking and a source of change and questioning in a conservative 19<sup>th</sup>-century society, as well as a source of inspiration. Additionally, we will try and discern what lies under the term "world work" by Matthew Reynolds through two film adaptations, seeking to determine whether these adaptations merely visually represent the novel or if, as in all creative process, particularly adaptations, directors made choices that ultimately shaped their final work. And if they did, we will strive to determine their objectives.

To begin our study of the novel and its two film adaptations in earnest, we will attempt to contextualise the novel both politically and socially in the Victorian era. We will also look at the author's life and what enabled her to write her novel. Moreover, we will dwell on the reception given to the novel when it was published and try to understand what these positive or negative reviews unveil about the place of women in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In addition, as anticipated by Penny Boumelha's quotation, the novel will be analysed through the prism of five major plots, including the three main ones in tension in C. Brontë's work, which are the plot of Romance, the Bildungsroman, and the plot of Desire. Boumelha's approach is an original one, providing an uncommon perspective on the novel *Jane Eyre*, but it is also a broad approach in that it allows us to deal with a number of issues. However, it still provides a framework for my master dissertation, and it is for all these reasons that I have chosen to use the prism provided by Penny Boumelha in *Key Women Writers* throughout my master dissertation.

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<sup>2</sup> Reynolds, Matthew, *et al.*, *Prismatic Jane Eyre: Close-Reading a World Novel Across Languages*, Open Book Publishers, 2023.



We will then delve into the translation of the 1847 novel into film, allowing Jane Eyre to exist differently in eras that do not belong to her, although C. Brontë's words, through her eponymous character, still resonate with our contemporary civilisations. In this part we will study the term adaptation and what it implies, and then, on the basis of the research carried out in part one, we will study the film adaptations of C.J. Fukunaga and R. Stevenson through the prism established by Penny Boumelha and studied in part one, in order to allow continuity between the study of the novel and that of the films.

Finally, it will be our turn to adapt Charlotte Brontë's work and take part in the "world work" described by Matthew Reynolds by adapting Charlotte Brontë's work and the two adaptations of 1943 and 2011 to the teaching of English in a secondary school class.

# **PART I**

## ***JANE EYRE* by Charlotte Brontë**

## 1.2. CONTEXTUALISATION

To better grasp the kind of milestone *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë represents in the very selective canon of literature we ought first to delve into the era of its making before focusing on the personal history of the mind behind it all: Charlotte Brontë.

### 1.2.1. Social and Political Contexts

*Jane Eyre* was published during the early Victorian period (1832/7-1901), a time of significant political and social unrest. Frédéric Regard even qualified this period as a time of “profound social crisis”<sup>3</sup> (Regard 9).<sup>4</sup>

On the one hand there were defining moments during the first half of the century such as the Waterloo victory (1815), the second Industrial Revolution mostly brought about by the Railway Age (1832-1862) proof of a British rise in both the military and economic field. But this period was also defined as the Age of Empire, a time during which the British Empire came to own one fifth of the world’s population. At that time the British Empire went as far as to believe that the world was on the verge of becoming British and that they would achieve the said goal if focused enough on the values of “work, efficiency, profitability and morals or more so respectability”<sup>5</sup> (Regard 8). At that time people believed in British superiority and British superiority as a justification was taken for granted by social Darwinism (*On the Origin of Species*, 1859), superiority became a theory based on pseudo-scientific theories, what changed over time is the justification. This induced alienation and othering of the colonised peoples. Hence “Bertha, [was] [viewed] either racially mixed, or, at the very least, perceived as ‘racially inferior’ because of her birth and upbringing in the West Indies” by the planters (Keunjung in *The Victorian Web*).

It was only in 1837, a decade before the publication of *Jane Eyre*, that Queen Victoria, eighteen years of age, ascended the throne of England. She led Britain right up until 1901. During her almost 64 years of reign Queen Victoria witnessed a series of acts that had a long and lasting impact. She and her government had to face growing dissatisfaction with the political system of that time. Over the course of the nineteenth century the working-class progressively organised to vouch for universal suffrage. They channelled their grievances in the first working class political movement in the history of Great Britain that was Chartism

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<sup>3</sup> *La crise sociale est malgré tout profonde.*

<sup>4</sup> Regard, Frédéric, & Augusting Trapenard, *Jane Eyre : De Charlotte Brontë à Franco Zeffirelli*. Paris, Sedes, 2008.

<sup>5</sup> *Le travail, l’efficacité, la rentabilité et la morale, ou plutôt la respectabilité, au rang de causes sacrées.*

(1838-1848). The first grievance on the 1838 People's Charter was a: "call for far-reaching reform of the political system"<sup>6</sup> (Regard 10). The nineteenth century saw the gradual extension of the vote. With the Luddite Riots and the Swing Riots the growing fear was that there would be a British Revolution like the 1789 French one and so as to avoid that, the government addressed some of their grievances. However, the 1832 Reform Act was no revolutionary text, the vote still rested on pecuniary qualifications and standing for parliament was still depending on property qualifications. Moreover, the reform itself was never conceived as anything but as a way of maintaining the established order. Voting was considered to be a privilege and the only reason why the upper middle class was granted the vote was because the ruling classes argued that they deserved it and by doing so they hoped to put an end to what they considered the alliance between the working classes: the mob, and the middle classes: the bourgeois demagogues. That is the reason why, even though I chose to open my master dissertation on the changing aspect of the Victorian period I am also very much aware that for the most part changes were made to keep the so-called unworthy population at bay. In that regard, the Victorian age was filled with contradictions.

Frédéric Regard claimed that "the first half of the 19th century saw the emergence of movements claiming to speak on behalf of a hitherto inaudible collective voice"<sup>7</sup> (Regard 9). The Chartist movement was one of them but not the only one. The Feminist and the Abolitionist movement were also both defining social and political reforms in the first half of the Victorian period. The Abolitionist movement was a revelation for the British population for the "19th century abolitionists revealed to the general public that their countries had deported over a million Africans to the Americas since 1781"<sup>8</sup> (Regard 10). Progressively from 1807 to 1833 they obtained first the abolition of the slave trade in the British Empire and thanks to the 1833 Emancipation Act slaves were freed, yet only after slave-owners, rather than the slaves themselves, received compensation, which portrays how highly the ruling classes viewed the slaves. Nevertheless, the Abolitionist movement found an ally in the Feminist movement. This close connection was best explained by Harriett Martineau when she said that "democracy can only exist when every citizen can be politically represented"<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *Les représentants exigent une réforme profonde du système politique.*

<sup>7</sup> *La première moitié du XIXe siècle est une époque qui voit apparaître des mouvements qui prétendent parler au nom d'une voix collective jusqu'ici inaudible.*

<sup>8</sup> *Les abolitionnistes du XIXe siècle révèlent au grand public que leur pays a déporté depuis 1781 plus d'un million d'Africains vers les Amériques.*

<sup>9</sup> *Une démocratie ne peut exister qu'à partir du moment où tout citoyen peut être politiquement représenté.*

(Martineau in Regard 10).<sup>10</sup> Even though the very word “feminist” only came in use in 1895 there were nonetheless a growing number of feminists during the first half of the nineteenth century, but I shall develop more on that subject later on in my master dissertation.

### 1.2.2. The Organisation of the Victorian Society

The fact remains that minorities (and that is as true today as it was during the first half of the Victorian period) had to ally and form groups, movements, to have a better chance to be heard. Nonetheless the prime difference was that at that time hierarchy was a prominent figure and a “great stratification existed between the upper and lower classes” (Vaughon in *The Victorian Web*)<sup>11</sup>, so much so that it permitted little to no exchange between classes or just before that: ranks.

Indeed, pre-industrial Britain or the eighteenth-century society was organised in ranks. In the nineteenth century those ranks were to become social classes with the addition of two new groups, the working class, and the bourgeoisie. The eighteenth-century British society could be described as a pyramid with very few people at the top and quite a large mass at the bottom.

At the top were the royal family, the nobility, the lesser nobility titled aristocrats, all wealthy landowners and they formed the landed class. The heads of these aristocratic families sat in the House of Lords then their sons were either elected to the House of Commons as Members of Parliament or in one of the local counties in their father’s estate which meant that social and political order in the nineteenth century could be described as an oligarchy, the government of the few.

In the middle were the so-called “middling sort” composed of merchants, bankers or sometimes lawyers. Yet, at the end of the eighteenth century with the advent of the Industrial Revolution there were new additions made to include the manufacturers and the factory owners. They were people of some means, they could be quite wealthy, but they were excluded from the franchise, they did not pay enough taxes in order to qualify to vote for it was based on taxation. This quickly became an issue in the nineteenth century.

At the bottom there were different groups for even among the lower order there was a

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<sup>10</sup> Martineau, Harriett, *Society in America*, 1837. In Regard, Frédéric, & Augustin Trapenard. *Jane Eyre : De Charlotte Brontë à Franco Zeffirelli*. Paris, Sedes, 2008.

<sup>11</sup> Vaughn, Wendy, “*Jane Eyre* and North and South on Social Class”, Providence: Brown University, p. 61, 1993.

strict hierarchy. First were the labourers or operatives who operated machines. Then there were the Poor who were on starvation wages which meant that they worked and earned a salary which was not enough for them to feed themselves. Finally, at the very bottom of what resembled a food chain were the “Paupers”.

The three groups evolved from ranks to class, at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The aristocracy remained the aristocracy, but the labourers formed the labouring class or the working class, the middling sort became the middle class, the nobility, and the gentry the upper class. The term “social class” started being used in the nineteenth century to distinguish groups in terms of their habits, their practices, their lifestyle, their experiences, and their expectations that is a social entity with some awareness of its situation and aspirations and organised in relation to those aspirations which meant that there were two main defining characteristics: a sense of identity and a sense of belonging. You knew you belonged to a social class because you shared the same habits, living and working conditions. The second characteristic was visible in the political organisation, you shared a common objective you got organised to protect or vindicate your interests (Letessier).<sup>12</sup>

Thus, the social classes were entangled with the social and political spheres. What is also important to know is that except if you were at the very top of that pyramid, your class could be used as a bias against you and worse if you were to be at the very bottom your morality would be in question. For example, the “paupers” were extremely poor and out of work.

They lack[ed] adequate nutrition, medicinal care, and sanitary resources [this] contributed to the stigma attached to poor people. The disease and malnutrition that ran rampant among the poor caused ‘stunted physiques’ and pale countenances that caused not only economic division between the classes, but also physical division as well (Vaughon in The Victorian Web).

To add to their misery, they were described by the middling sort and aristocracy as being dependent on charities or relief. Indeed, in 1789, as France went through the Revolution, in England Jeremy Bentham pushed to the fore the concept of “Utilitarianism” in “An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation”. For those who believed in a Utilitarian based politic, the purpose of any government was to ensure the greatest happiness to the greatest number of people. For them prevailed the notion of utility, instead of happiness, to do that and according to utilitarianism principle the government should not

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<sup>12</sup> Letessier, Anne-Sophie, *19<sup>th</sup> Century Society: Entrepreneurs and Working People*, Saint-Étienne, Université Jean Monnet, 2021.

intervene in the economy, or in people's lives. Utility and efficiency were their mantra, anything not efficient needed to be reformed. Therefore, there was a strong connection between Utilitarianism and *Laissez-faire* which centred on the limits to government and state intervention and used the moral principle as a justification. Thus the "paupers" were often left alone in their misery and the concept of *Self-Help* added to their shame, for the believers of those theories, poverty was the individual's responsibility. In that regard, individuals should not look to the state for help, they should help themselves consequently poverty and wealth were placed in a moral hierarchy.

[Stark social realities during the Brontë's days were phrased as such by Schwingen:] Apparently, many people in the ruling classes justified their apathy towards the poor by dwelling upon the absence of legal barriers (i.e., slavery) against improving one's situation. According to this line of reasoning, it is the fault of the poor themselves if they remain destitute; for, they have failed to lift themselves up (Schwingen in The Victorian Web).<sup>13</sup>

### 1.2.3. The Brontë Family

*Jane Eyre* successfully bloomed in that peculiar era. However, it is crucial to understand that the creation of such a milestone was only made possible by Charlotte Brontë peculiar upbringing. Indeed, she was the third of six children born to Patrick Brontë and Maria Branwell on April 21, 1816, West Yorkshire, England. Patrick Brontë who later on changed his name to Brontë was an Irish Anglican clergyman and writer whereas her mother Maria Branwell was born in a family of prosperous merchants in Cornwall. Her parents met when her mother was helping with the running of a school in Yorkshire (Wenborn 134).<sup>14</sup> Therefore, Charlotte Brontë as well as her five siblings, Maria, Elizabeth, Patrick Branwell, Emily Jane, and Anne Brontë were raised in a household imbued both with religion and literature. Raised both by their father, appointed curate at Haworth, and especially their aunt, Elizabeth Branwell, who seized the reins of their education, once their mother died, the Brontë children always found refuge in the world they created. The small sized books that the children wrote in order to escape reality but also their father's censorship are now famous worldwide. The story goes that Patrick, more commonly referred to as Branwell to avoid any confusions with his father, was offered soldier figures which sparked in Charlotte and Branwell the inspiration to create a world called *Angria*. Emily and Anne wrote about *Gondal*

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<sup>13</sup> Schwingen, Mary, "Class Attitudes in The Westminster Review and *Jane Eyre*", Providence: Brown University, p. 73, 1994.

<sup>14</sup> Wenborn, Karen, In Bryant, Clive, *Jane Eyre: The Graphic Novel, Original Text Version*, United Kingdom, Towcester, Classical Comics Ltd, 2008.

which is a collection of articles and poems (Pfordresher 20).<sup>15</sup> This profusion of media from sagas, plays, poems and stories were the Brontë's children first literate experiences. It also fostered Charlotte's passion for literature and storytelling, an urge, to turn to writing that would never cease to inhabit her. As I will develop in another part of my master dissertation, Charlotte Brontë both had a wild imagination and resorted to what she knew best. Indeed, her own life formed the basis of her novels and *Jane Eyre* is no exception to that statement.

Yet even though the Brontës seemed to be the perfect upper middle class Victorian family living in an environment that encourages imagination and reflection surrounded by scholars and ecclesiastical people, the Brontë family also had their fair share of grief for tragedies kept hovering over their heads. Indeed, it all started when Maria Branwell succumbed to cancer in 1821 when Charlotte Brontë was only five years old. But tragedy and sickness were a common thread to that family's story. Indeed, in 1825 at around ten years old both Maria and Elizabeth died of tuberculosis after a stay at the Clergy Daughters' School at Cowan Bridge.

This early exposure to the power of imagination and storytelling fuelled Charlotte's passion for literature and writing from a young age. Furthermore, the tragic events that shaped her early life, including the loss of her mother and elder sisters, and the challenging experiences at the Clergy Daughters' School, instilled in Charlotte a sense of resilience and a deep understanding of the human condition. These experiences left an indelible mark on her psyche, and they would later find resonance in the themes and emotional depth of her literary works. Additionally, Charlotte's experiences as a governess and teacher provided her with first-hand insights into the lives of different social classes, which later informed her portrayal of characters from various backgrounds in *Jane Eyre*. The novel's protagonist, Jane Eyre, is a strong and independent woman, whose struggles and determination mirror some of Charlotte's own experiences. The strong moral and religious upbringing Charlotte received from her father, Patrick Brontë, also influenced her writing. The themes of morality, conscience, and the clash between passion and societal expectations are prominent in *Jane Eyre*, reflecting the moral dilemmas faced by its characters.

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<sup>15</sup> Pfordresher, John, *The Secret History of Jane Eyre: How Charlotte Brontë Wrote Her Masterpiece*, New York, W. W. Norton & Company, 2017.



#### 1.2.4. Literary Inspirations

Thus, Charlotte Brontë's private sphere, encompassing her family, upbringing, and personal trials, served as the predominant wellspring of influence in the creation of *Jane Eyre*. Even though it is important to bear in mind that *Jane Eyre* was largely the product of her imagination and personal creativity, it is nonetheless worth mentioning that she did draw inspiration from various sources in its creation. Indeed, she also drew inspiration for her writings from those of her peers. Two Victorian authors' works in particular should be mentioned when talking about *Jane Eyre*'s influences; they are those of William Makepeace Thackeray and Charles Dickens.

During the first half of the Victorian period writers believed that "literature had a mission to expose social problems and arouse people's moral consciousness" (Grellet 107).<sup>16</sup> To better counter the Victorian middle-class respectability craving for more recognition from the highest classes of that time they engaged in a total almost "complacent" (Grellet 107) advocacy of Victorian values which were those of "honesty, diligence, sobriety, high-moral principles, fidelity in marriage" (Grellet 107) and they created a form of narrow-mindedness in British Victorian citizens. Numerous writers of that time both male and female, reacted against those values and considered that literature had to address the issues of the division of Britain better known as Disraeli's "two nations". All attacked the evils of their times such as the division between the rich and the poor, Utilitarianism and others engaging in different routes.

Dickens chose to engage his work on the path of social reform and be a critique of the social injustices prevalent in Victorian England. To do so he created characters faced by the harsh realities of the time. For example, he wrote *Oliver Twist* (1837-1839) in which he portrayed the plight of orphaned children and the harshness of the workhouse system stressing the need for social change concerning the employment and working conditions of children in the mills. In the same vein, *Hard Times* (1854) criticised the dehumanising effect of industrialisation for example.

Thackeray, on the other hand, decided to advocate a more satirical and critical approach to Victorian society. Resorting to humour to pass down his criticisms of the aristocracy he wrote *Vanity Fair* (1847-1848). This novel exposed the hypocrisy, shallowness,

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<sup>16</sup> Grellet, Françoise, *Literature in English: Anthologie des littératures du monde anglophone*, Jean-Bleuzen, Vanves : Hachette Éducation, 2002.

and corruption of the upper classes to such an extent that *Vanity Fair* constituted the satire *par excellence* of that part of society. Through this work, he unveiled the moral decay and the divide between the rich and the poor, painting a stark contrast to the idealised Victorian values as defined before.

Therefore, Thackeray, was a realist and a moralist who strived to depict the flaws and vanities of high society, focusing on what he observed. In contrast, Dickens used his imagination and storytelling to depict the lives of plain people and elicit empathy towards them to spark among his readers a need for social changes. Together, their “novels offered a comprehensive view of the mid-nineteenth-century English society, successfully highlighting social issues and engaging readers in important discussions” (Reviron-Piégay).<sup>17</sup>

To buttress the idea of W.M. Thackeray as one of Charlotte Brontë’s literary influence is the following preface to the second edition of *Jane Eyre*.

There is a man in our own days whose words are not framed to tickle delicate ears: who, to my thinking, comes before the great ones of society, much as the son of Imlah came before the throned Kings of Judah and Israel; and who speaks truth as deep, with a power as prophet-like and as vital — a mien as dauntless and as daring. Is the satirist of “Vanity Fair” admired in high places? I cannot tell; but I think if some of those amongst whom he hurls the Greek fire of his sarcasm, and over whom he flashes the levin-brand of his denunciation, were to take his warnings in time — they or their seed might yet escape a fatal Rimoth-Gilead.

Why have I alluded to this man? I have alluded to him, Reader, because I think I see in him an intellect profounder and more unique than his contemporaries have yet recognised; because I regard him as the first social regenerator of the day — as the very master of that working corps who would restore to rectitude the warped system of things; because I think no commentator on his writings has yet found the comparison that suits him, the terms which rightly characterise his talent. They say he is like Fielding: they talk of his wit, humour, comic powers. He resembles Fielding as an eagle does a vulture: Fielding could stoop on carrion, but Thackeray never does. His wit is bright, his humour attractive, but both bear the same relation to his serious genius that the mere lambent sheet-lightning playing under the edge of the summer- cloud does to the electric death-spark hid in its womb. Finally, I have alluded to Mr. Thackeray, because to him — if he will accept the tribute of a total stranger — I have dedicated this second edition of *Jane Eyre* (Bell<sup>18</sup> preface) (Emphasis mine).

The list of her inspirations does not stop at those two famous writers. Indeed, as noticed by Claire Bazin Charlotte Brontë was also very fond of Scott and said: “For fiction, read Scott alone!” (Gaskell in Bazin 6).<sup>19</sup> She also believed that she felt particularly

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<sup>17</sup> Reviron-Piégay, Floriane, *British Literature: From 1850 to 1950, From Victorianism to Modernism*. Saint-Étienne, Université Jean Monnet, 2021.

<sup>18</sup> Bell, Currer, *Jane Eyre*, London, Elder & CO, 1847.

<sup>19</sup> Bazin, Claire, *Jane Eyre, Le Pèlerin moderne*, Nantes, Ed. Du temps, 2005. Claire Bazin takes this quote from the work of GASKELL, Elizabeth. *The life of Charlotte Brontë*. Penguin Classics. London, 1857.

inspired by Byron as suggested by Rochester's very character but also the description of the places, Thornfield House, the landscapes, and Jane Eyre's supernatural dreams, especially on the eve of her aborted wedding (Bazin 6)<sup>20</sup> and even then, the list is not exhaustive, but I will add to it later in my research paper.

#### 1.2.5. Women's Place in Literature

The common point of all these authors, regardless of their era, their work, is that all of them published under their real male name. Yet, Charlotte Brontë did not have the same opportunity. Indeed, she and her sisters adopted a pen name, hers was Currer Bell. At that time, people felt that it was unnatural for women to write and that they were simply not as good as men writers. And they thought that the lack of female names in the canon<sup>21</sup> of literature could be considered as proof that women were not suitable for writing. Surprisingly, the seventeenth century was more inclined to characterize the art of literature as a female domain. This implies that numerous successful female authors existed during that period; however, their works have around the eighteenth century been dismissed and disregarded by the critics, with only few making it into the literary canon.<sup>22</sup> Consequently, from the eighteenth century onwards, literature was not a domain in which women were allowed to thrive on easily, at least not on the same scale.<sup>23</sup>

[Dale Spender draws the conclusion that:] the sex of the author is the single most important factor in any test of greatness and in any preservation for posterity [and that the] process of literary evaluation which has been conducted almost exclusively by men has been masked with a façade disinterestedness (Spender 137).<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> *Rochester est un héros Byronien (revu et corrigé) à travers la peinture des lieux, la demeure de Thornfield, des paysages et des rêves nourris d'éléments surnaturels (les rêves de Jane la veille de son mariage avorté).*

<sup>21</sup> The canon of literature is the collective name applied to the literary works considered to be "major" works of literature. In practice, the canon can be identified as the literary works that are most frequently taught in schools and universities. However, today there is a strong need to revise the Canon and Revise Literary History. One of the solutions put to the fore are the all-female anthologies. However, some say it is a necessary evil, yet some feminist scholars are of a different opinion. Indeed, "labels [...] are by nature isolating" and the all-female anthologies "eat up [women's] creative time, steering the focus away from their own work." (Gleeson).

Gleeson stated that all female collections of writing are a necessary evil: "There should be no need for all-female anthologies [...], but the word 'writer' has a default meaning: 'man'" (Gleeson). Her hope is that the day will come when such strategies are no longer needed: "Gender should be as inconsequential to a writer's acumen as whether they are experimental or realist or favour the linear novel over the fragmented essay" (Gleeson). Sinead Gleeson, "Profound Deafness to the Female Voice" (2018) (Laird)

<sup>22</sup> "So if no women are to be found among the early 'greats' it would undoubtedly be because women have not written anything 'great'" (Spender 119).

<sup>23</sup> "About half these novels were written by women and *all* of them have since failed the test of greatness, then explanations are required" (Spender 119)

<sup>24</sup> Spender, Dale, *Mothers of the Novel: 100 Good Women Writers Before Jane Austen*, London, Pandora Press, p. 115-137, 1986.

Therefore, in the eighteenth century “women have tried to increase their chances of publication by pretending to be men.” (Spender 118). This practice reversed the dynamics within the literary domain, as “men [would also] masquerade as female authors in the attempt to obtain some of the higher status (and greater chances of publication) which went with being a woman writer”(Spender. 118).

That situation can be explained by the beliefs of the Victorian era, especially values attached to women who came to be referred to as the Angels in the House. This concept was coined by Coventry Patmore, a poet who wrote that “Man must be pleased; but him to please / Is woman’s pleasure” (Patmore).<sup>25</sup> In writing those verses he captured the confined space women had in Victorian times and buttressed once again the belief of separate spheres, the domestic one for women and the public one for men. Yet, with *The Angel in the House* he added the concept of devotion women had to have towards their family and husband. Because of those ideologies, middle-class women who did not work felt that their contributions were needed at home, and they had to meet the expectations of both the society and their family to which they had to be fully devoted.

In a way Jane Eyre refusing to become Rochester’s mistress and to get involved in bigamy, even though she did not lack the desire to do so, mirrored the ideal of the *Angel in the House*.

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<sup>25</sup> Patmore, Coventry, *The Angel in the House*, London, John W. Parker and Son, 1854.

Man must be pleased; but him to  
 please Is woman's pleasure;  
 down the gulf  
 Of his condoled necessities  
 She casts her best, she flings  
 herself. How often flings for  
 nought, and yokes Her heart to an  
 icicle or whim,  
 Whose each impatient word  
 provokes Another, not from  
 her, but him; While she, too  
 gentle even to force His  
 penitence by kind replies,  
 Waits by, expecting his  
 remorse, With pardon in her  
 pitying eyes; And if he once,  
 by shame oppress'd, A  
 comfortable word confers,  
 She leans and weeps against his  
 breast, And seems to think the  
 sin was hers; Or any eye to see  
 her charms,  
 At any time, she's still  
 his wife, Dearly devoted  
 to his arms;  
 She loves with love that cannot  
 tire; And when, ah woe, she loves  
 alone,  
 Through passionate duty love springs  
 higher, As grass grows taller round a  
 stone.  
 (Patmore)

In this poem Coventry Patmore praises an idealised woman. However, if you were this woman, you could not possibly be a writer for it did not leave enough room for women to fulfil any kind of personal ventures. Virginia Woolf herself, years later, alluded to this issue of being able to be a woman writer in her 1929 essay entitled *A Room of One's Own*. For her audience to fully comprehend the issue at stake she took the example of Shakespeare's imaginary sister and she explained why, according to her, there was no female Shakespeare. It was once believed that literature, particularly works refined enough to be included in the literary canon, was not in women's nature. However, Virginia Woolf argued that this perception had nothing to do with nature but was entirely rooted in societal norms. According to her, talent does not spring from nowhere, it is shaped by the influence of society. Women lacked education, money, independence, and their own space to be writers. But of course, the barriers were not just material, she also mentioned the ideological barriers and the hostility by which female works were received by the patriarchal society. Society was steeped in a patriarchal ideology, the idea that a woman was at her best in the domestic

sphere. It is because the whole society believed in those ideas, not only her parents, that we can speak of a patriarchal society.

This was put to the fore by Benjamin Graves' article in the *Victorian Web* when he quoted Poet Laureate Robert Southey who argued that "literature cannot be the business of a woman's life, and it ought not to be. The more she is engaged in her proper duties, the less leisure will she have for it", and Nathaniel Hawthorn, stating that "Women writers" are a "damned mob of scribbling women who only write anything worth reading if the devil is in them" (Graves).<sup>26</sup>

Both quotations prove, if need be, that the social bias against women did not stop within the realm of a poem or two but was a common and therefore shared belief at that time to such an extent that it could fall under the term of "patriarchal ideology".

Thus, fully aware that she neither met the criteria of a respected woman nor of a respected writer of her time, Charlotte Brontë felt compelled to use a masculine pen name to be taken seriously. She and her sisters wanted to be sure their work would be received and assessed on its own terms. They did not want to be dismissed immediately as women writers. She defined her pen name as a necessary evil, as Hanson explains.

Charlotte, though far from averse to the publication of her writings, was scarcely less anxious than Emily to preserve her anonymity: "It is very kind and right in you to answer 'Currer Bell' to all enquiries respecting the authorship of *Jane Eyre*", she wrote to Williams. "That is the only name I wish to have mentioned in connexion with my writings. 'Currer Bell' only I am and will be to the public. If accident or design should deprive me of that name, I should deem it a misfortune-a very great one. Mental tranquillity would then be gone; it would be a task to write, a task which I doubt whether I could continue. If I were known, I should ever be conscious in writing that my book must be read by ordinary acquaintances, and that idea would fetter me intolerably" (Hanson 261).<sup>27</sup>

Therefore because of those lack of opportunities, women writers had to pave the way for themselves and that is what Charlotte Brontë did, she had the education and the necessary talent however the society she lived in would not have been ready to welcome her work in the canon of literature if they had known she was a woman which is the reason why she was so keen on keeping preserving her real identity secret.

Yet, what she feared arrived and finally her real identity leaked to the public and even

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<sup>26</sup> Graves, Benjamin, "Desire, Class Position, and Gender in *Jane Eyre* and *Pickwick Papers*", Providence, Brown University, p.-73, 1996.

<sup>27</sup> Hanson, Lawrence, & Elisabeth, Hanson, *The Four Brontës: The Lives and Works of Charlotte, Branwell, Emily, and Anne Brontë*, Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1967.

though it may have been one more hurdle for her she nonetheless contributed to the representation of women writers in the literary world and that was strongly needed, for as Virginia Woolf stated it, at that time scarce were the female writer figures to identify with:

But what I find deplorable, I continued, looking about the bookshelves again, is that nothing is known about women before the eighteenth century. I have no model in my mind to turn about this way and that. Here am I asking why women did not write poetry in the Elizabethan age, and I am not sure how they were educated; whether they were taught to read; whether they had sitting-rooms to themselves; how many women had children before they were twenty-one; what, in short, they did from eight in the morning till eight at night (Woolf 38)<sup>28</sup> (Emphasis mine).

When they came to set their thoughts on paper—that is that they had no tradition behind them, or one so short and partial that it was of little help. For we think back through our mothers if we are women. It is useless to go to the great men writers for help, however much one may go to them for pleasure. Lamb, Browne, Thackeray, Newman, Sterne, Dickens, De Quincey—whoever it may be—never helped a woman yet, though she may have learnt a few tricks of them and adapted them to her use (Woolf 64).

Thus, in *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf imagined the fate of Shakespeare's equally brilliant sister Judith and traced the rise of women writers, emphasising Jane Austen, the Brontës, and George Eliot, but also alluding to Sappho, one of the first lyric poets. Faced with the question of whether women's writing was specifically feminine, she concluded that the great female authors "wrote as women write, not as men write" (Woolf 63). She thus raised the possibility of a specifically feminine style, but at the same time she emphasised – citing the authority of Coleridge – that the greatest writers, among whom she included Shakespeare, Jane Austen, and Marcel Proust, are androgynous and able to see the world equally from a man's and a woman's perspective: "If one is a man, still the woman part of his brain must have effect; and a woman also must have intercourse with the man in her. Coleridge perhaps meant this when he said that a great mind is androgynous" (Woolf 82).

#### 1.2.6. The Governess' Place in the Victorian Society

Therefore, her writing was singular from the moment Charlotte Brontë started writing for she could write from the point of view of a woman whom she was more than familiar with. She could also lean on her former position as a governess which was also a very specific position to be in the Victorian society.

First, a governess was a woman who lived with the family and had to look after and educate the children of the family she was in. The children were boys, until they were old

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<sup>28</sup> Woolf, Virginia, *A Room of One's Own*, London, Penguin Books, 2004.

enough to go to school, and girls. During the Victorian period, girls had a governess to learn various subjects such as geography, reading and writing but when they reached the age of eighteen, they followed teachings that were supposed to train them up for the accomplishments which meant that they had to develop the required skills to enter the middle-class marriage market and be ready to find a husband. The governesses were also responsible for the moral education of their students.

[So, it] was a difficult kind of job. On the one hand you [were] teaching girls to show off, on the other hand you [were] also trying to be a good Christian woman. It [was] a very complicated role and it is no wonder that an awful lot of governesses found it an awful strain (Hughes 00:01:50).<sup>29</sup>

The governesses were middle-class young women who themselves had a fine education. Yet, they were in need of some income; perhaps their family died or got bankrupt. In order to keep on being a respectable middle-class woman and not become part of the shameful working class they became involved in the duties of a governess and went to live with another family and taught their children. Charlotte Brontë found herself in that very situation. Indeed, as her father was losing sight and could not fulfil his duties the Brontës needed some money, Charlotte and her sisters could not count on their brother Branwell for he was a drunk who spent more than his wages, if wages there were. Hence Charlotte Brontë took on a position of governess for it was all that women in the position of Charlotte Brontë and Jane Eyre could strive for without degrading their status. Charlotte Brontë once stated on the harshness of her position that:

None but those who had been in the position of a governess could ever realise that dark side of “respectable” human nature; under no great temptation to crime, but daily giving way to selfishness and ill temper, till its conduct toward those dependent on it sometimes amounts to a tyranny of which one would rather be the victim than the inflicter (Gaskell 9).

Being a governess also meant that you had an in-between position in society, you were neither part of the servants nor a member of the family you were serving. Kathryn Hughes summed up this position with the phrase “betwixt and between” (Hughes 00:04:19). Benjamin Graves described this position in those terms:

The only occupation at which an unmarried middle-class woman could earn a living and maintain some claim to gentility was that of a governess, but a governess could expect no security of employment, minimal wages, and an ambiguous status, somewhere between servant and family member, that isolated her within the household (Norton Anthology of English Literature II 903) (Grave in The Victorian Web).

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<sup>29</sup> Hughes, Kathryn, “The Governess”. *YouTube*, directed by British Library, December 19, 2014.



Governesses were often despised first by the servants because they represented more work for them but also by their employer as visible in Blanche Ingram's words on the matter when she says: "You should hear mama on the chapter of governesses; Mary and I have had a dozen at least in our day; half of them detestable and the rest ridiculous, and all incubi." (Brontë 205).<sup>30</sup> This hatred of governesses is also transposed in a later filmic adaptation through: "Does *that* person want you?" (Stevenson<sup>31</sup> 01:09:00) combined with high-angle shots to further belittle the film-Jane.

Therefore, governesses had to be self-reliant and financially independent. The figure of the governess became extensively used as main characters during the 19th century, and it was a very useful one for she was "a friendless girl who [was] going to have adventures, who [was] going to be absolutely respectable [...] she [was] a fantastic figure for novelists." (Hughes 00:06:00). Brontë, by making Jane a governess, allowed her readership to see life from both the servant's point of view and the aristocratic one, consequently building a bridge between two worlds hitherto alien to one another.

### 1.2.7. Reception of *Jane Eyre*

Charlotte Brontë continued her defiance of the accepted canon of literature when she portrayed her main character as plain, small and unattractive and allowed Jane Eyre, later in a governess position, to capture the complete and undivided attention of her readers by constantly breaking the fourth wall and addressing them directly exposing her strong feelings and beliefs even when it was in complete breach of the Victorian views on what the proper roles of a woman entailed.

However crucial the first-person narrator is in *Jane Eyre*, transposing this technique to cinema constitutes an arduous task yet both Stevenson's 1943 adaptation and Fukunaga's 2011 one successfully did so, each using different techniques. Indeed, as we shall see it in the second part of my master dissertation, Fukunaga transposed the first-person narrator resorting to long flashbacks while Stevenson added Jane's voice over reading what is flaunted to be the 1847 novel.

In the hypotext, the reader is led by the governess-narrator herself who does not shy away from voicing her feelings through an extensive use of the first-person narrator and the

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<sup>30</sup> Brontë, Charlotte, *Jane Eyre*, London, Elder & CO, 1847.

<sup>31</sup> Stevenson, Robert, *Jane Eyre*, 1943.

pronoun “I”. The quintessence of that open window on an uncensored woman’s perception at that time intervenes at the novel’s end when Jane declares “Reader, I married Him” (Brontë 429). Indeed, instead of expressing herself as an Angel in the House devoted to her husband and feeling blessed for being chosen as his wife, she inverts the balance and takes the power back by showing self-determination and a refusal to fade away behind the husband’s overshadowing figure, casting herself as the active figure of the union in an utmost unconventional portrayal of a married union for the Victorian times. All in all, the breakthrough of the first-person narrative voice carried on by a governess as well as her self-determination and her refusal to fulfil the roles assigned to her by society were received with shock by the conservative Victorian readers.

[Indeed, it was felt that it] present[ed] a challenge to the status quo of Victorian society. Lending a strong voice to such an otherwise marginalized narrator ma[de] a statement vis-à-vis the contemporary society. However, instead of greeting this narrative strategy as a victory in terms of feminism and a challenge to class rigidity, some prominent Victorian reviewers harshly criticized the novel. It is possible that these criticisms grew out of an ulterior motive, that being the perceived sense of threat to gender and class roles (Mayer in The Victorian Web).<sup>32</sup>

Bearing in mind this quotation explaining the feminist and social positions conveyed by the 1847 novel, it seems that R. Stevenson, almost a century later, did an overall poor job of conveying what Jane Eyre really is about and at the same time positions himself with the more conservative Victorian critics<sup>33</sup>. R. Stenson’s adaptation of the plot of the Bildungsroman.

Indeed, once published, in 1847, the first publication of Jane Eyre was surrounded by various reactions. Some critics and readers recognised the quality of a good writer in *Jane Eyre*, the praises were addressed to a man writer for her real identity was not yet revealed. Claire Bazin even opened her introduction by saying: “While the supposedly male author was recognized for his vigour, style and abundant imagination, some critics deplored his audacity and lack of respect for conventions”<sup>34</sup> (Bazin 1) (Emphasis mine). Yet others could not disagree more as proven by the *Atlas* on October 23 which credited the author with:

A knowledge ‘of the profoundest springs of human emotion [...] and this review proclaims that this ‘is one of the most powerful romances’ to have appeared in many years. It’s an innovative work, with ‘little or nothing of the old, conventional stamp upon it.’ and concludes that this ‘tale of passion’ is ‘a book to make the pulses gallop and the heart beat, and to fill the eyes with tears (Pfordrescher 11).

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<sup>32</sup> Mayer, Sonia, “Hey, Teacher, Leave Those Readers Alone! Why a Governess’s Narrative in Jane Eyre Shocked Certain Victorians”, *English* 507.

<sup>33</sup> See 2.2.2.1. R. Stevenson’s Adaptation of the Bildungsroman’s Plot.

<sup>34</sup> *Si l’on reconnaissait à l’auteur, supposé masculin, des qualités de vigueur, de style, une imagination foisonnante, certains critiques n’en déploraient pas moins l’audace, le manque de respect des conventions.*

However rapturous some critics were, praising the advent of a new type of literature, the publication of *Jane Eyre* sparked negative criticisms from the very first day. The biggest question in her readers minds was the question of her sex. Indeed, in 1847 the general public did not know her sex but was very curious. One of them was W.M. Thackeray who was convinced it was a “woman’s writing” (Miller 1)<sup>35</sup> to such an extent that he wrote a note to the publisher William Smith Williams to decipher whose woman was really behind it all. She received various criticisms on the matter such as: “If *Jane Eyre* was the work of a woman, she must be a woman unsexed” to which she responded in those terms:

[She responded in those terms:] To you I am neither man nor woman, I come before you as an author only. It is the sole standard by which you have a right to judge me, the sole ground on which I accept your judgement (Nelson 00:01:49).<sup>36</sup>

More than her sex, the rejection of both societal norms and writing conventions in the hand of a marginalised figure startled some like Matthew Arnold who wrote:

Miss Brontë has written a hideous, undelightful, convulsed, constricted novel [...] one of the most utterly disagreeable books I’ve ever read [...] [because] the writer’s mind contains nothing but hunger, rebellion and rage and therefore that is all she can, in fact, put in her book (Mayer in The Victorian Web).

Even though it sparked disdain or outrage from some conservative groups for it did not emulate the Victorian beliefs of the time, *Jane Eyre* was nonetheless met by a tremendous success: “While she wrote slowly, *Jane Eyre* continued to sell well. In April a third edition was published, and this too was soon sold out” (Hanson 255). Therefore, *Jane Eyre* was considered the “publishing sensation of the season” (Miller 1). This novel’s long-lasting inspiration and impacts on different generations shed another light on the novel and provide the contemporary readers with a new lens to look through.

### 1.2.8. Feminism and Revision

It is now through the lens of feminism that I would like to study *Jane Eyre*. “The Madwoman in the Attic” written by Gilbert and Gubar in 1979 put *Jane Eyre* at the centre of the feminist canon of the Victorian times taking care to determine the limits of the novel, and this is what I shall try to develop now.

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<sup>35</sup> Miller, Lucasta, “Prim and Improper”, London, *The Guardian*, September 23, 2006.

<sup>36</sup> Nelson, Christine, “Charlotte Brontë: An Independent Will”, *Youtube*, directed by The Morgan Library & Museum, September 9, 2016.

First, to give a definition of feminism would be too arduous a task for it never ceased evolving to better endorse women's grievances through time. Also, even though women started to gather before the Victorian period, in England, the very term "feminist" did not come into use before 1895. The evolution of the feminist movement is expressed in waves. We can speak about waves of feminism for their fight circle around different objectives. The first wave of feminism fought mainly for female suffrage. The second wave of feminism argued for a more liberated sexuality and a say in the matter, for the acquisition of reproductive rights and a new role in the family as well as in the workplace. The third and most recent wave of feminism put intersectionality as the cornerstone of their movements. They want feminism to stop being a privilege reserved to an elite and, for more equality, want to encompass in their fights the notions of race, class and sexual orientation, to include every outside factor that could endanger the balance of equality. The last wave of feminism saw the advent of black feminism and post-colonial feminism and is very critical of the previous movements for it accuses them of being too reductive and only opened to white middle-class heterosexual women.

*Jane Eyre* if nothing is carried by the voice of a woman filled with desires who ends up acquiring agency, the capacity to act for herself. She even attains subject status, she is seen in a positive light by the readers, she is an active component in her life and poses challenges to patriarchal ideology as explained before. This enumeration constituted and still constitutes today a list of reasons for first and second wave feminists to inscribe *Jane Eyre* as the figurehead of their movement.

Yet, others, especially feminists identifying with the third wave of feminism would staunchly oppose this list of criteria as a biased white heteronormative woman's point of view. Indeed, *Jane Eyre* finds self-fulfilment as a subject by othering another woman namely Bertha Mason. Indeed, Charlotte Brontë objectifies her mainly through the character of Rochester who takes racial inequality for granted. Thus, Bertha's narration is only conveyed in pejorative and stereotyped terms, she is depicted as different in a negative sense.

[In that regard readers are provided with an:] [o]rientalist discourse which describes conquered subjects in terms of negation — how, as 'others,' they are unlike and unequal to the colonizing force. In *Jane Eyre*, Rochester makes his fortune in the West Indies where he is persuaded to Bertha — whose 'lavishly displayed' charms 'dazzled' and 'stimulated' him with their promise of exotic mystery and conquest (301). Rochester's disclosure of Bertha's presence is couched in terms of her madness and primitive 'nature' which is 'wholly alien' to his own. She is intellectually deficient; her 'common, low, narrow' mind and 'pigmy intellect' comprehend only 'coarse and trite, perverse and imbecile' conversations. She is pathologized in terms of medicine. Her family includes a 'dumb idiot' brother and a mother who had been in a 'lunatic asylum' (302).

From her assault on Paul Mason to her fiery death, Bertha's unrestrained passion stands in stark opposition to Blanche Ingram, whose very name suggests the whiteness which excludes Bertha (Graves in *The Victorian Web*).

This depiction of Antoinette Bertha Mason as a mad beast is echoed in subsequent film adaptations. Bertha is in fact always portrayed in a deplorable state, both mentally and physically. As in the novel, this use of the image of a mad Bertha is intended to illicit the public's empathy for Rochester, making Bertha a mere technique employed as part of Rochester's characterisation as well as give depth to the protagonists' relationship.<sup>37</sup>

Because of her race and the fact that he deems her mad Rochester locks up Bertha Mason treating her like property as such, yet the reader is encouraged to sympathise with him because Bertha's supposed "madness and primitive physicality drives Rochester to 'hideous and degrading agonies'" (Brontë 302). Bertha Mason, on the other hand, and even though she is the one being captured is deemed mad and the fact that Rochester locks her up for that is portrayed as the kindest solution fathomable, in fact we are led to believe, after he continuously belittles her, that the only solution possible really is to lock her up and hide her existence to the outside world so that she does not constitute a hindrance to Rochester's and Jane Eyre's romance.

Rochester loosely associates 'madness' with Bertha's racially 'impure' lineage as well as the tropical West Indian climate in which she grew up. He mentions 'the fiery West Indian' place of Bertha's upbringing (ch 27) and her Creole blood as the roots of her insanity. He claims that 'Bertha Mason is mad [because] she came of a mad family; -- idiots and maniacs through three generations! Her mother, the Creole, was both a mad woman and a drunkard!' (ch 26). Later, Rochester specifically mentions that Bertha's family wished for him to marry Bertha because of his 'racial' superiority. 'Her family wished to secure me because I was of good race, and so did she' (ch 27). After offering a variety of associations between madness and 'impure' racial composition, Rochester [...] reverts to West Indian climate as a cultivating force of such madness, a kind of hell for the 'civilized' Englishman. Regarding his stay in Jamaica, Rochester states, 'The air was like sulphur steams[...] I could find no refreshment anywhere. [...] The moon was setting in the waves, road and red, like a hot cannon-ball [it was] a world quivering with the ferment of tempest' (ch 27) (Cho in *The Victorian Web*).<sup>38</sup>

Complaints burst out against feminist scholars and what they had chosen to ignore in establishing the novel *Jane Eyre* as a core text namely Bertha Mason's Jane Eyre dark double. P. Boumelha<sup>39</sup> denounced the omerta regarding the slave trade in *Jane Eyre* which posed a limit to a feminist reading of the novel:

There are, I think, ten explicit references to slavery in *Jane Eyre* They allude to slavery

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<sup>37</sup> See 2.2.1. The Transposition of Romance Plot.

<sup>38</sup> Kenjung, Cho, "Contextualizing Racialized Interpretations of Bertha Mason's Character", Providence: *Brown University*, p. 151, 2003.

<sup>39</sup> Boumelha, Penny, *Key Women Writers, Charlotte Brontë*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990.

in Ancient Rome and in the seraglio, to the slaveries of paid work as a governess and of dependence as a mistress. None of them refers to the slave trade upon which the fortunes of all in the novel are based. (...)This brings us close to one of the central problems of the novel, and in turn of certain kinds of feminist readings of it: the apparently blithe predication of the liberty and happiness of a few upon the confinement of the many (Boumelha 62) (Emphasis mine).

Therefore, the main impediment to regarding the novel *Jane Eyre* as a feminist one is its absence of intersectionality; the term “white ink”<sup>40</sup> novel could therefore in some aspect very much be applied to *Jane Eyre*.

In 1966, “*Wide Sargasso Sea*” addressed those complaints. Indeed, the latter is a rewriting of *Jane Eyre* from the point of view of Bertha Mason who was only considered as Jane Eyre’s doppelgänger in Charlotte Brontë’s novel. In 1966 Jean Rhys<sup>41</sup> revised *Jane Eyre*; she constructed the prequel of the 1847 novel by reading it against the grain. She went against the vision of Bertha Mason as an obstacle to overcome for Jane Eyre and Rochester’s marriage which corresponds to the vision along the grain. Reading against the grain is a difficult mental gymnastics which strives to determine where the story behind oppressed characters comes from and what it can actually be, it is to try and decipher the story of the oppressed, it offers them a voice, a story and an explanation.

Indeed, reading the novel we can see that Bertha is reduced to Rochester’s property, he even went as far as changing her name which in itself means that she is deprived of her identity, she consequently becomes a non-person. We see the process of othering taking place; it is unfolding before our very eyes, and we now get a clear vision of Rochester the puppeteer pulling the strings. What takes place is the transformation of Bertha into the other that is created in *Jane Eyre*. Gayatri Spivak in “Three Women’s Texts and Critique of Imperialism” insists that Bertha Mason or should I say Antoinette was not born mad, but she became mad not because of bestiality but because of an intolerable situation (Spivak in Graves).<sup>42</sup> In the process she lost herself and her freedom. There is a strong sense of imperialism highlighted in Jean Rhys’s novel for she focuses on giving a voice to black

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<sup>40</sup> “For some feminist critics, the wild zone, or ‘female space,’ must be the address of a genuinely women-centred criticism, theory, and art, whose shared project is to bring into being the symbolic weight of female consciousness, to make the invisible visible, to make the silent speak. French feminist critics would like to make the wild zone the theoretical base of women’s difference. In their texts, the wild zone becomes the place for the revolutionary women’s language, the language of everything that is repressed, and for the revolutionary women’s writing in ‘white ink.’” [Showalter, “Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness”] (Laird)

<sup>41</sup> Rhys, Jean, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1966.

<sup>42</sup> Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, “Three Women’s Texts and a Critique of Imperialism.” *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 243–61, 1985. In Graves, Benjamin, “Desire, Class Position, and Gender in *Jane Eyre* and *Pickwick Papers*”, Providence, Brown University, p. 73, 1996.

characters originally pushed to the side, the margins of the story. Jean Rhys's text is not perfect either for she ignores the whole story of anticolonial feeling in the West Indies. Thus, *Jane Eyre* adopts a more hopeful tone, from a feminist perspective *Jane Eyre* seems to conquer patriarchy as Jane is the one who proudly declares her love to a diminished Rochester. Yet, in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Antoinette later on deprived of her Christian name and baptised "Bertha" by Rochester seems to be crushed by patriarchy.

What also transpired from Gilbert and Gubar's theory is that Victorian women writers usually struggled to break free from the dichotomy of women either portrayed as "angels" or "monsters" (Wikipedia); they tended to follow in the footsteps of male writers who bestowed on women characters either pure angelic features or rather more devilish and rebellious ones. *Jane Eyre* as we have just seen with the character of Bertha Mason is no exception to that. Jane Eyre can be considered as an "angel" for she does not let Rochester tarnish her reputation. Through the use of strong religious beliefs and behaviours Jane succeeded in modelling Rochester to correspond to the Victorian values. Queen Victoria, maybe not aware at that time of that common and therefore reductive dichotomy in women's roles even wrote her opinion in her journal after reading the novel with her husband.

Finished *Jane Eyre*, which is really a wonderful book, very peculiar in parts, but so powerfully and admirably written, such a fine tone in it, such fine religious feeling, and such beautiful writings. The description of the mysterious maniac's nightly appearances awfully thrilling. Mr. Rochester's character a very remarkable one, and Jane Eyre's herself a beautiful one. The end is very touching, when Jane Eyre returns to him and finds him blind, with one hand gone from injuries during the fire in his house, which was caused by his mad wife (Buckle and Benson 390) (Emphasis mine).

This quote from November 23, 1880, mirrors the issues of being a woman writer in a man's world. To gain recognition and acceptance for their work at that time women had to make sure their novels respected the binary vision of women either as angels (Jane) or as monsters (Bertha).

Whatever one's point of view on the feminist aspect of *Jane Eyre*, one thing is for certain it is a great novel which successfully carved its way in the canon of literature, which has the merit of making its readers pause and ponder on the plight of women, if not upon the first reading certainly upon the second or third attempt. Reading against the grain<sup>43</sup> can prove to be a difficult intellectual ordeal but it is a necessary exercise if we are to better understand the issues of an era and their resonance in our own, and as we have just seen, *Jane*

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<sup>43</sup> "Re-vision – the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction – is for women more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival" (Rich 18).

*Eyre* lends itself well to that exercise. The best test of a novel's greatness is possibly its endurance in time and on this ground Charlotte Brontë's novels may well have surpassed her contemporaries: her novels are still read, studied, adapted into movies<sup>44</sup> and *Jane Eyre* gave birth to another masterpiece by Dominican writer Jean Rhys who wrote its prequel *Wide Sargasso Sea*. This in itself, the ability to spark the imagination of another writer must be credited to Charlotte Brontë's genius and talent as a woman writer who left enough uncharted territory in her novel for another novelist to feel free to develop the story of one of her secondary characters (Reviron-Piégay).

### 1.3. JANE EYRE BY CHARLOTTE BRONTË

#### 1.3.1. Subversive writing – Intertwinement of Plots

The genius of Charlotte Brontë lies in her use of narrative genres. She took it upon herself to breathe life into strong, independent, and most importantly, female characters. A prime example is *Jane Eyre*, who, as mentioned before, defies numerous Victorian values. As a female protagonist, Jane possesses a strong sense of self and a yearning for more, showcasing Brontë's ability to use narration to emulate the breakthrough of her characters. According to Bazin, "*Jane Eyre* deftly interweaves genres, which its author employs by subverting them"<sup>45</sup> (Bazin 3). In this process, Brontë addressed critical issues.

The issues of representativeness and representability, of selection and occlusion, of speaking and being spoken for [or in other words] narration might in a relatively unproblematic way reveal and restore what has been concealed and suppressed in patriarchal societies (Boumelha 16).

An alternate perspective suggests that Brontë's subversion of genres was not a choice but a necessity. As Boumelha noted, it involved "the question of available plots for untold stories" (Boumelha 16). Nevertheless, the interweaving of plots allowed her to infuse her novel with the elements she desired, free from the constraints imposed by conventional narrative genres.

Therefore, the Gothic novel, the ballad, the folk-tale, the fairy-tale, romantic fiction, the governess novel, children's fiction, spiritual auto-biography, have all been detected within it, and some of them discussed in detail (Boumelha 63).

It is therefore a long list of plots. That is why, in my research, I chose to focus on Boumelha's delineation of the three main plot structures that are in tension in *Jane Eyre*: the

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<sup>44</sup> See part II: The Case of R. Stevenson and C.J. Fukunaga.

<sup>45</sup> *Jane Eyre mêle habilement les genres, que son auteur utilise en les subvertissant.*



heroine's plot also referred to as the Romance plot; the *bildungsroman* plot also known as the hero's plot or plot of vocation and finally the plot of desire sometimes called the domestic plot. Thus, my master dissertation will be developed through the lens provided by Penny Boumelha in *Women Writers* as follows.

So, there is a relationship of tension between the plots of romance, of Bildung and of desire. And since the plots of romance and of vocation are teleological, while the story of female desire conduces to unimaginable ends, the tension is one between middles and endings, between utopian expansion and socially ratified closure. Where romance charts the reconciliation of the heroine to the already written sexual fate of women, and where Bildung plots the reconciliation of self-determination with socialisation, desire can be the name of what is left unaccounted for and undomesticated by these forms of closure" (Boumelha 20).

### 1.3.2. The Romance Plot

#### 1.2.2.1. Definition of The Romance Plot

"Though they were written during the Victorian Age, the novels of the three Brontë sisters belong to the Romantic Age in spirit" (Grellet 118).

The Romantic Age, like the Victorian Age, lacks a clear consensus among historians regarding its chronological framework. Some define it as the period between the 1789 French Revolution and Queen Victoria's accession to the throne in 1837. Others delineate it from the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) to the 1832 Reform Act. Regardless of the timeframe, there is no debate about its nature. It was deemed an age marked by turmoil, giving rise to the Romantic Movement, as highlighted by Françoise Grellet (Grellet 82). This movement emerged in reaction to the preceding Augustan Age characterised by a staunch belief in controlled passions and reason. It was thought that "civilization could reach perfection if only passions were controlled" (Grellet 82). On the contrary, the Romantics saw civilisation as pervaded by an excess of conventions and decorum, for them the only way out of this type of corruption was through passion hence the title "from reason to passion" (Grellet 82) provided by F. Grellet on the Romantic period section. The focus through that period was on the inner self and went against Locke's ideas of man as a tabula rasa<sup>46</sup> (Grellet 82). During the Romantic era, the theme of love was explored intensely and passionately in literature by authors like Lord Byron, Mary Shelley, Jane Austen, and Romantic poets who helped shape the literary landscape with works that included romantic elements and complex love stories. However, if we talk about the specific genre of the romance novel, we can go

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<sup>46</sup> "Locke [...] saw man as a passive tabula rasa receiving outer impressions: instead, the Romantics asserted the creative powers of man, whose imagination could shape the environment" (Grellet 82).

back to works that predate the Romantic era. Examples of romance novels can be found in mediaeval literature “which relates tales of chivalry and courtly love” (Grellet 464). These stories, such as Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde*, often featured noble characters and courtly elements, and love was often portrayed in an idealised way. Thus, although the romance novel has roots that go back long before the Romantic era, this period significantly contributed to its popularisation and flourishing as a distinct literary genre.

When *Jane Eyre* was written most novels with a central female figure hinged on the romance plot. *Jane Eyre* was no exception. The traditional structure of the Romance Plot, as highlighted by Boumelha, aligns with Victorian norms, wherein a central female figure undergoes a courtship fraught with antagonism from a male counterpart. This fundamental structure, involving tensions, complications, and the resolution leading to marriage, reflects the societal expectations prevalent during the Victorian era.

Brontë’s novel recapitulates in some form this same basic romance plot (...). It is rather simply summarised: a woman is alone and consequently lonely; she meets and is courted. Usually in a strikingly antagonistic way, by a man. External complications intervene and seem to put an end to the relationship; the complications are resolved, marriage or at least the planning of marriage, ensues. It is in most respects a conventional enough version: heterosexual, exclusive, with marriage as narrative telos (Boumelha 19) (Emphasis mine).

This very specific framework persists into modern times, as seen in works like *Twilight* and *Bridget Jones* among a long list of other modern time romance stories, they are examples of the enduring appeal and adaptability of that specific plot structure that originated in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

#### 1.2.2.2. The Romance Plot in *Jane Eyre*

Romance narratives have often faced criticism from both scholars and critics, often perceived as a lesser form of literature reserved for women. It was also deemed too conservative by feminist scholars who viewed the traditional happy ending, reducing a woman’s life to an inevitable marriage, as a negative outcome. This type of closure which perpetuated a patriarchal pattern through numerous romance novels, was seen as detrimental to the woman’s cause. Yet, in *Jane Eyre*, a novel often considered part of the feminist literary canon, this apparent paradoxical deployment of the romance plot demands closer scrutiny. Therefore, rather than approaching this plot structure with disdain, we ought to first understand why women writers repeatedly devised narratives where a man initially appears dangerous or a risk but is ultimately transformed through love.

Miller makes a similar point: ‘By female plot I mean quite simply that organization of

narrative events which delimits a heroine's psychological, moral and social development within a sexual fate.... Female plot thus is both what the culture has always already inscribed for a woman and its reinscription in the linear time of fiction.... It comes to us, of course, from male as well as from female imaginations, Pamela, say, or Madame Bovary. But female-authored literature generally questions the costs and overdetermination of this particular narrative economy with an insistence such that the fictions engendered provide an internal, dissenting commentary on female plot itself (Boumelha 17).

Charlotte Brontë, for instance, seized this plot structure symptomatic of a prevailing patriarchy to better subvert the heroine's plot. To that end she added some twists, for example as we shall discover in this part, she added a physical impediment to the male character of Rochester before his union to Jane could come to fruition.

In the analysis of the Romance Plot within Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Penny Boumelha's insights in "Key Women Writers" provide a valuable framework for understanding the conventions and transformations of this narrative archetype. Boumelha's assertion that women writers have actively reworked the romance plot to challenge gender stereotypes and societal expectations becomes a crucial lens through which to examine *Jane Eyre*. Brontë, situated within a patriarchal society, as previously mentioned, navigates the established norms of her time, utilising the romance plot to not only adhere to but also subvert expectations. According to Boumelha, "The central issue in the feminist romance plot is the relationship between agency and desire, and the struggle to achieve a balance between the two" (Boumelha 77). This delicate balance becomes a focal point for understanding the feminist dimensions of Brontë's narrative choices. Quoting Boumelha, "Women writers have reworked the romance plot in various ways, with the aim of challenging the gender stereotypes and social expectations that have traditionally shaped this plot" (Boumelha 17). The analysis then shifts toward *Jane Eyre* to explore how Brontë's portrayal of the central relationship challenges and transcends conventional norms. To serve my argumentation, Rochester, initially presented as an antagonistic figure, undergoes a transformative journey through the redemptive power of love. This echoes the broader struggle within feminist romance plots, a negotiation between agency and desire, culminating in a redefined resolution. Yet, as already mentioned, it also reinforces one Victorian stereotype, namely women's morals being powerful enough to change a man and lead him to be better.

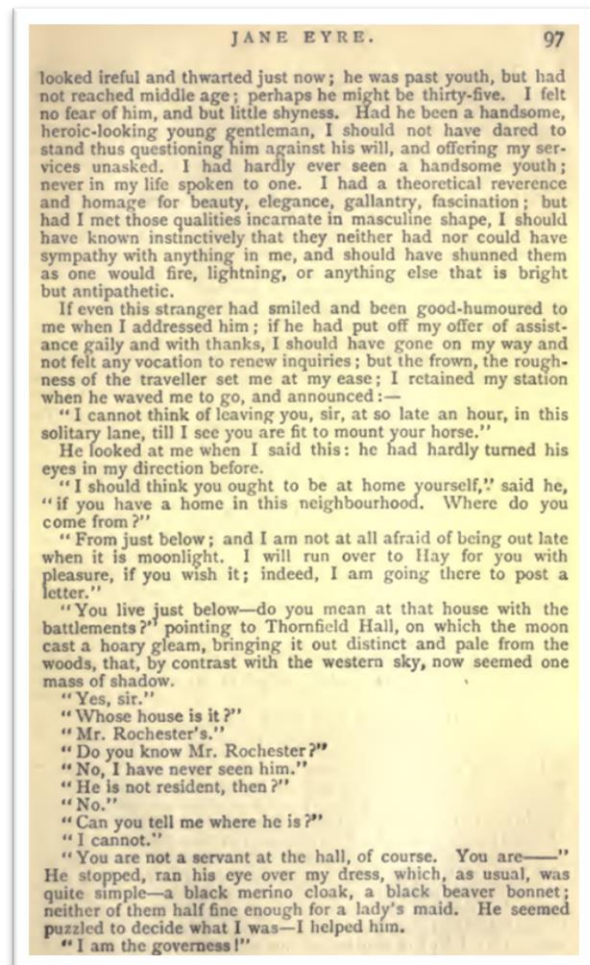
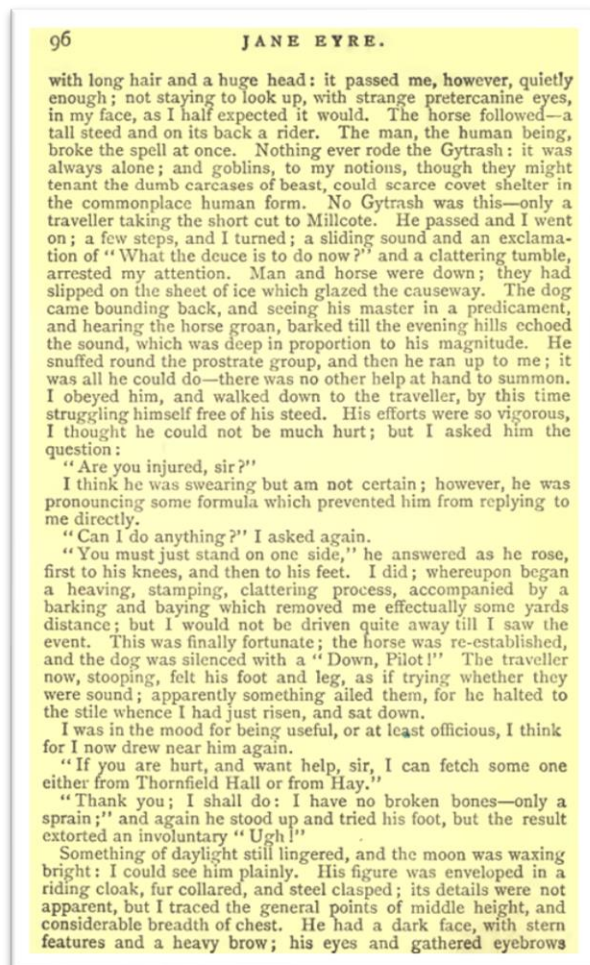
#### 1.2.2.4. Key Events in Relation to the Romance Plot in *Jane Eyre*

Boumelha's following statement unveils Brontë's deliberate departure from the predictable trajectory of romance narratives.

Jane Eyre is not a conventional romance, but rather a radical exploration of the dynamics of power and agency within a romantic relationship [...] [Brontë] uses the romance plot to highlight the complexity of female desire and the struggle for self-determination (Boumelha 63).

The choice to deviate from convention becomes a strategic tool for Brontë to challenge societal norms and provoke contemplation of the multifaceted nature of female desire and the relentless pursuit of self-determination.

Yet, at first glance, *Jane Eyre* appears to be a traditional romance plot. Indeed, in *Jane Eyre* the romance plot centres around the relationship between Jane and Mr. Rochester. Victorian readers as well as the contemporary ones are not at a loss concerning their relationship; from the beginning they know more or less what awaits them, for their love story draws on the conventional characteristics of the romance plot. Indeed, in the novel Charlotte Brontë followed all the stereotypical bends of the traditional Romance plot and we get to follow their love story from their first meeting, when Rochester falls off his horse and Jane helps him and their subsequent conversation in which he appears mysterious, cold, and superior.



"Ah, the governess!" he repeated; "deuce take me, if I had not forgotten! The governess!" and again my raiment underwent scrutiny. In two minutes he rose from the stile; his face expressed pain when he tried to move.

"I cannot commission you to fetch help," he said; "but you may help me a little yourself, if you will be so kind."

"Yes, sir."

"You have not an umbrella that I can use as a stick?"

"No."

"Try to get hold of my horse's bridle and lead him to me. You are not afraid?"

I should have been afraid to touch a horse when alone, but when told to do it I was disposed to obey. I put down my muff on the stile, and went up to the tall steed; I endeavoured to catch the bridle, but it was a spirited thing, and would not let me come near its head; I made effort on effort, though in vain: meantime, I was mortally afraid of its trampling fore-feet. The traveller waited and watched for some time, and at last he laughed.

"I see," he said; "the mountain will never be brought to Mahomet, so all you can do is to aid Mahomet to go to the mountain; I must beg of you to come here."

I came. "Excuse me," he continued; "necessity compels me to make you useful." He laid a heavy hand on my shoulder, and, leaning on me with some stress, limped to his horse. Having once caught the bridle, he mastered it directly, and sprang to his saddle, grimacing grimly as he made the effort, for it wrenched his sprain.

"Now," said he, releasing his under-lip from a hard bite, "just hand me my whip; it lies there under the hedge."

I sought it and found it.

"Thank you; now make haste with the letter to Hay, and return as fast as you can."

A touch of a spurred heel made his horse first start and rear and then bound away; the dog rushed in his traces: all three vanished,

"Like heath that, in the wilderness,  
The wild wind whirls away."

I took up my muff and walked on. The incident had occurred and was gone for me: it *was* an incident of no moment, no romance, no interest in a sense; yet it marked with change one single hour of a monotonous life. My help had been needed and claimed; I had given it: I was pleased to have done something, trivial, transitory though the deed was, it was yet an active thing, and I was weary of an existence all passive. The new face, too, was like a new picture introduced to the gallery of memory, and it was dissimilar to all the others hanging there: firstly, because it was masculine; and, secondly, because it was dark, strong, and stern. I had it still before me when I entered Hav. and

(Brontë 96-98)

Upon their first encounter Rochester has the typical behaviour of the male protagonist in a narrative romance. Indeed, he appears abrupt and enigmatic, a description which can correspond to Orson Welles starring Rochester in R. Stevenson's adaptation, evoking a sense of curiosity in both the reader and Jane. Rochester exudes superiority in both status and height, riding a horse that Jane compares to a "Gytrash" (Brontë 96), a creature usually never to be mounted. This creature arouses the reader's curiosity because a Gytrash is usually a bad omen, a sign of impending doom. Consequently, this initial meeting sets the tone for what follows, an extract filled with tension and mysteries, adumbrating the rest of the novel. Rochester comes across as antagonistic, displaying brusqueness and cynicism, almost dismissive at times. For instance, he is very inquisitive and allows himself a number of questions because of his social status, without ever revealing his identity, which contrasts sharply with Jane's vulnerability exposed by his inquiries and "scrutiny" (Brontë 98), a situation the reader understands justified by their differing statuses.



‘You are not a servant at the hall, of course. You are —’

He stopped, ran his eye over my dress, which, as usual, was quite simple a black merino cloak, a black beaver bonnet; neither of them half fine enough for a lady’s maid. He seemed puzzled to decide what I was. I helped him.

‘I am the governess!’ (Brontë 97)

Initially unapologetic and dismissive of her assistance, Rochester later changes his mind and eventually seeks for her help. From the outset, Rochester appears physically impelled, another foreshadowing of what lies ahead. Therefore, this encounter foretells numerous aspects of the novel such as the future conflicts arising from their difference in status and in character. Indeed, Rochester’s protective stance towards his identity and past, coupled with the unspoken tension between them, hint at obstacles that will unfold as the narrative progresses. The first encounter aligns with the elements of the typical romance plot. Although described as an incident of “no romance, no interest” (Brontë 98), it serves as a prelude that disrupts Jane’s monotony, propelling her unwittingly into a new chapter of her life.

Following this encounter, Brontë invites the reader to witness the couple’s growing displays of affection and, overall, their increasing attraction to each other.

(Brontë 118, 124)

118 JANE EYRE.

“Your language is enigmatical, sir: but though I am bewildered, I am certainly not afraid.”

“You *are* afraid—your self-love dreads a blunder.”

“In that sense I do feel apprehensive—I have no wish to talk nonsense.”

“If you did, it would be in such a grave, quiet manner, I should mistake it for sense. Do you never laugh, Miss Eyre? Don’t trouble yourself to answer—I see you laugh rarely; but you can laugh very merrily: believe me, you are not naturally austere, any more than I am naturally vicious. The Lowood constraint still clings to you somewhat; controlling your features, muffling your voice, and restricting your limbs; and you fear in the presence of a man and a brother—or father, or master, or what you will—to smile too gaily, speak too freely, or move too quickly; but, in time, I think you will learn to be natural with me, as I find it impossible to be conventional with you; and then your looks and movements will have more vivacity and variety than they dare offer now. I see at intervals the glance of a curious sort of bird through the close-bars of a cage: a vivid, restless, resolute captive is there; were it but free, it would soar cloud-high. You are still bent on going?”

“It has struck nine, sir.”

“Never mind—wait a minute: Adèle is not ready to go to bed yet. My position, Miss Eyre, with my back to the fire, and my face to the room, favours observation. While talking to you, I

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pleasure in the old hall and its environs. I meditated wonderingly on this incident: but gradually quitting it, as I found it for the present inexplicable, I turned to the consideration of my master’s manner to myself. The confidence he had thought fit to repose in me seemed a tribute to my discretion: I regarded and accepted it as such. His deportment had now for some weeks been more uniform towards me than at the first. I never seemed in his way; he did not take fits of chilling hauteur: when he met me unexpectedly, the encounter seemed welcome; he had always a word and sometimes a smile for me: when summoned by formal invitation to his presence, I was honoured by a cordiality of reception that made me feel I really possessed the power to amuse him, and that these evening conferences were sought as much for his pleasure as for my benefit.

I, indeed, talked comparatively little; but I heard him talk with relish. It was his nature to be communicative; he liked to open to a mind unacquainted with the world, glimpses of its scenes and ways (I do not mean its corrupt scenes and wicked ways, but such as derived their interest from the great scale on which they were acted, the strange novelty by which they were characterised); and I had a keen delight in receiving the new ideas he offered, in imagining the new pictures he portrayed, and following him in thought through the new regions he disclosed, never startled or troubled by one noxious allusion.

The ease of his manner freed me from painful restraint: the friendly frankness, as correct as cordial, with which he treated me, drew me to him. I felt at times as if he were my relation, rather than my master: yet he was imperious sometimes still: but I did not mind that; I saw it was his way. So happy, so gratified did I become with this new interest added to life, that I ceased to pine after kindred: my thin crescent-destiny seemed to enlarge; the blanks of existence were filled up; my bodily health improved; I gathered flesh and strength.

And was Mr. Rochester now ugly in my eyes? No, reader: gratitude, and many associations, all pleasurable and genial, made his face the object I best liked to see; his presence in a room was more cheering than the brightest fire. Yet I had not forgotten his faults: indeed, I could not, for he brought them frequently before me. He was proud, sardonic, harsh to inferiority of every description: in my secret soul I knew that his great kindness to me was balanced by unjust severity to many others. He was moody, too; unaccountably so: I more than once, when sent for to read to him, found him sitting in his library alone, with his head bent on the folded arms; and, when he looked up, a morose, almost a malignant scowl, blackened his features. But I believed that his moodiness, his harshness, and his former faults of morality (I say *former*, for now he seemed corrected of them) had their source in some cruel cross of fate. I believed he was naturally a man of better tendencies, higher principles, and purer tastes than such as circumstances had developed, educa-

Through *Jane Eyre*'s first-person narration, "J.E., je, the narrating I" (Boumelha 76), we witness their relationship's progress. Rochester's affection towards Jane grows significantly. He goes from disdain to hope for he aspires for Jane to "in time, learn to be natural with [him]" (Brontë 108). In that hope he invites her regularly for tea and smiles at her, unlike any master would smile to his governess. This newfound consideration towards Jane appears shortly after the tea they share on their first conventional meeting at Thornfield Hall. During tea, Jane Eyre breaks the Victorian codes of conduct especially towards one's master and expresses herself very bluntly regarding Rochester's beauty or lack thereof. She does not necessarily find him attractive and tells him so directly, a straightforwardness that intrigues and moves Rochester. This marks the real beginning of their mutual discovery and friendly exchanges, far from what decorum demands: "The ease of his manners freed me from painful restraints" (Brontë 124). It is possible to interpret Rochester falling off his horse as a hint to their future equality in status but assuredly already in this extract Jane considers the barriers of their respective positions to have fallen: "I felt at times as if he were my relation, rather than my master" (Brontë 124). He asks her for tea at evening times and she "relishes" and "delights" herself to hear him talk; she is even "dr[awn] to him" (Brontë 124) which could not be more explicit of their growing affection. The very end of that page reads almost as an ode<sup>47</sup> to Rochester.

And was Mr. Rochester now (Brontë 96-98) ugly in my eyes? No, reader: gratitude, and many associations, all pleasurable and genial, made his face the object I best liked to see; his presence in a room was more cheering than the brightest fire (Brontë 124).

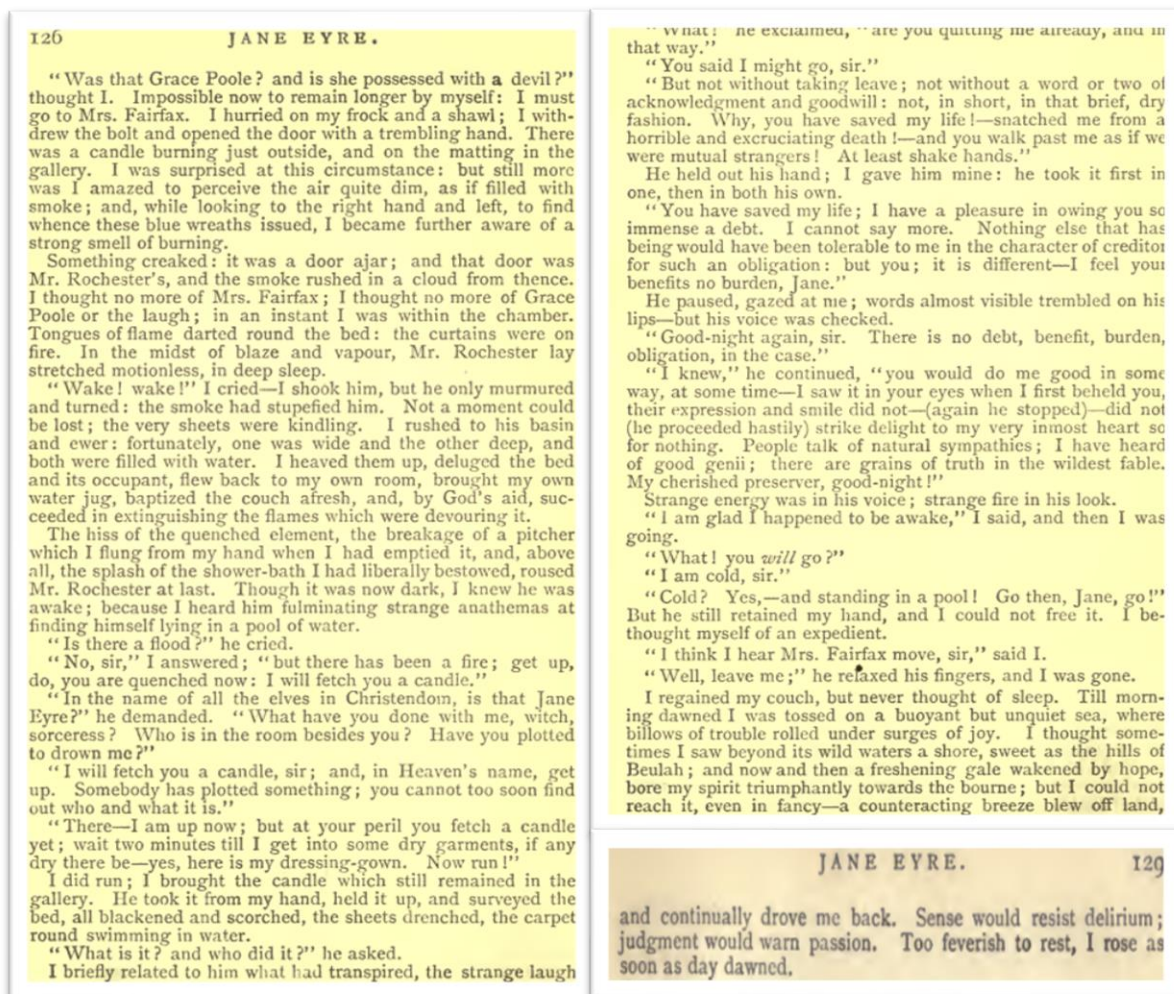
Yet Charlotte Brontë strived to show more than a naive protagonist and made Jane recognise Rochester's "faults [of being] proud, sardonic" (Brontë 124). Moreover Brontë, at least in words for now, put power in the hand of Jane who is presented almost as a goddess ready to mould Rochester to perfection. Indeed, Jane believes he has "excellent materials in him" to make of him or instil in him "higher principles" (Brontë 124) to suit her expectations. Therefore, Jane already takes some distance from the dismissed governess she was during their first encounter.

However, it would not be a romance plot without obstacles which on top of Jane and Rochester's differences in character and status do not take long to occur. Indeed, the imagery of fire which represents their growing tenderness goes out of control and transforms into

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<sup>47</sup> Ode: An elaborate lyric poem on a serious subject, often in praise of someone or to celebrate a lofty subject (Grellet 46).

“passion” (Brontë 126). This triggers Rochester’s wife anger and leads her to burn Thornfield Hall down, starting with Rochester’s own bedroom. On this particular occasion, the passion they share is still intact or even more incandescent for Rochester does not wish to be parted from Jane after the episode of his room burning, and insists on her waiting and staying even though she repeats that she is drenched and consequently cold: “What! you *will* go” “I am cold, sir.” “Cold? Yes, and standing in a pool! Go then, Jane, go” But he still retained my hand, and I could not free it” (Brontë 128)



(Brontë 126, 128, 129)

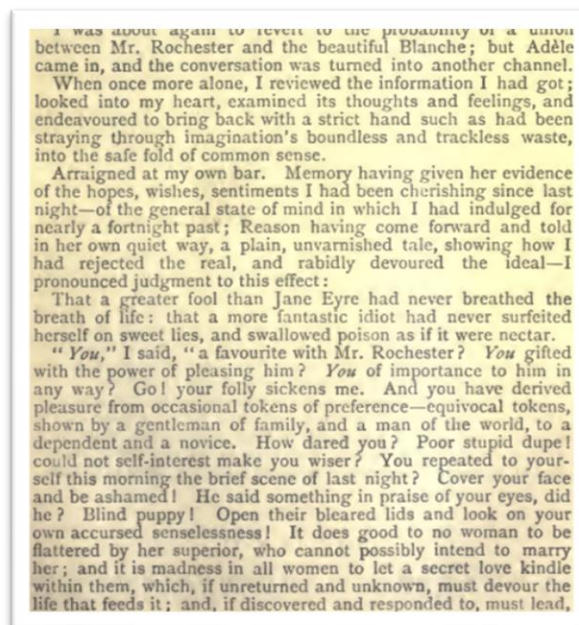
Rochester seems out of breath, as if he were gasping, no doubt consumed by this passion.

I knew, he continued, you would do me good in some way, at some time I saw it in your eyes when I first beheld you, their expression and smile did not (again he stopped) did not (he proceeded hastily) strike delight to my very inmost heart so for nothing. People talk of natural sympathies; I have heard of good genii; there are grains of truth in the wildest fable. My cherished preserver, good-night! (Brontë 128) (Emphasis mine).



Passion consumes, raising the question: how long will they hold under such conditions? Moreover, the frequent repetition of the term “passion” become unmistakable, yet the very essence of passion implies a limitation within a temporal framework, something that is a fleeting experience destined not to last, which implies both pleasure and suffering.<sup>48</sup> The latter can manifest itself in various forms; for Jane, on that night it takes the guise of insomnia: “Too feverish to rest, I rose as soon as day dawned” (Brontë 129).

While it is now evident to the reader that Rochester and Jane occasionally engage in flirtatious behaviour, they continue to test each other, as illustrated by the incident in which Rochester attempts to make Jane jealous by flirting with Blanche Ingram.<sup>49</sup> This episode corresponds to the obstacles they have to face and is therefore part and parcel of the tensions inherent to the romance plot.



I was about again to revert to the probability of a union between Mr. Rochester and the beautiful Blanche; but Adèle came in, and the conversation was turned into another channel. When once more alone, I reviewed the information I had got; looked into my heart, examined its thoughts and feelings, and endeavoured to bring back with a strict hand such as had been straying through imagination's boundless and trackless waste, into the safe fold of common sense. Arraigned at my own bar. Memory having given her evidence of the hopes, wishes, sentiments I had been cherishing since last night—of the general state of mind in which I had indulged for nearly a fortnight past; Reason having come forward and told in her own quiet way, a plain, unvarnished tale, showing how I had rejected the real, and rabidly devoured the ideal—I pronounced judgment to this effect: That a greater fool than Jane Eyre had never breathed the breath of life: that a more fantastic idiot had never surfeited herself on sweet lies, and swallowed poison as if it were nectar. “You,” I said, “a favourite with Mr. Rochester? You gifted with the power of pleasing him? You of importance to him in any way? Go! your folly sickens me. And you have derived pleasure from occasional tokens of preference—equivocal tokens, shown by a gentleman of family, and a man of the world, to a dependent and a novice. How dared you? Poor stupid dupe! could not self-interest make you wiser? You repeated to yourself this morning the brief scene of last night? Cover your face and be ashamed! He said something in praise of your eyes, did he? Blind puppy! Open their bleared lids and look on your own accursed senselessness! It does good to no woman to be flattered by her superior, who cannot possibly intend to marry her; and it is madness in all women to let a secret love kindle within them, which, if unreturned and unknown, must devour the life that feeds it: and, if discovered and responded to, must lead,

(Brontë 132)

Jane then paints to calm her passion and feelings for Rochester. The conclusion of these portraits, of herself and Miss Ingram, is the striking contrast between the two women, with the aim of reminding herself in moments of vulnerability that she pales in comparison to Miss Blanche Ingram, who surpasses her in both beauty and social status. Thus, the passion

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<sup>48</sup> From late Latin use of *passion* to render Greek *pathos* “suffering”, also “feeling, emotions”. *Online Etymology Dictionary*, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/passion>.

<sup>49</sup> *Blanche est le premier obstacle à la relation entre Jane et Rochester. Blanche [est] le double socialement présentable de Bertha* (Bazin 27).

that drives her is all-consuming, assaulting her psyche. Hence, she feels the need to safeguard herself by creating a visual reminder so as not to lose herself in illusion in the future; as previously stated, she feels she need to “resist delirium” through “reason” (Brontë 129).

However, Rochester manipulates this passion which he feels just as strongly. Through his close relationship with Blanche, he leads Jane to believe that he intends to marry Miss Ingram. This is evident in the charades they play together and the musical performances they present as a duet to all the evening’s guests. Nevertheless, in chapters XVII and XVIII, Jane Eyre regains her self-confidence and self-esteem. She claims that Rochester does not genuinely love Blanche and that his desire to marry her stems from social conventions and financial considerations (Brontë 158).

I saw he was going to marry her, for family, perhaps political reasons; because her rank and connections suited him; I felt he had not given her his love, and that her qualifications were ill adapted to win from him that treasure. This was the point—this was where the nerve was touched and teased—this was where the fever was sustained and fed: *she could not charm*

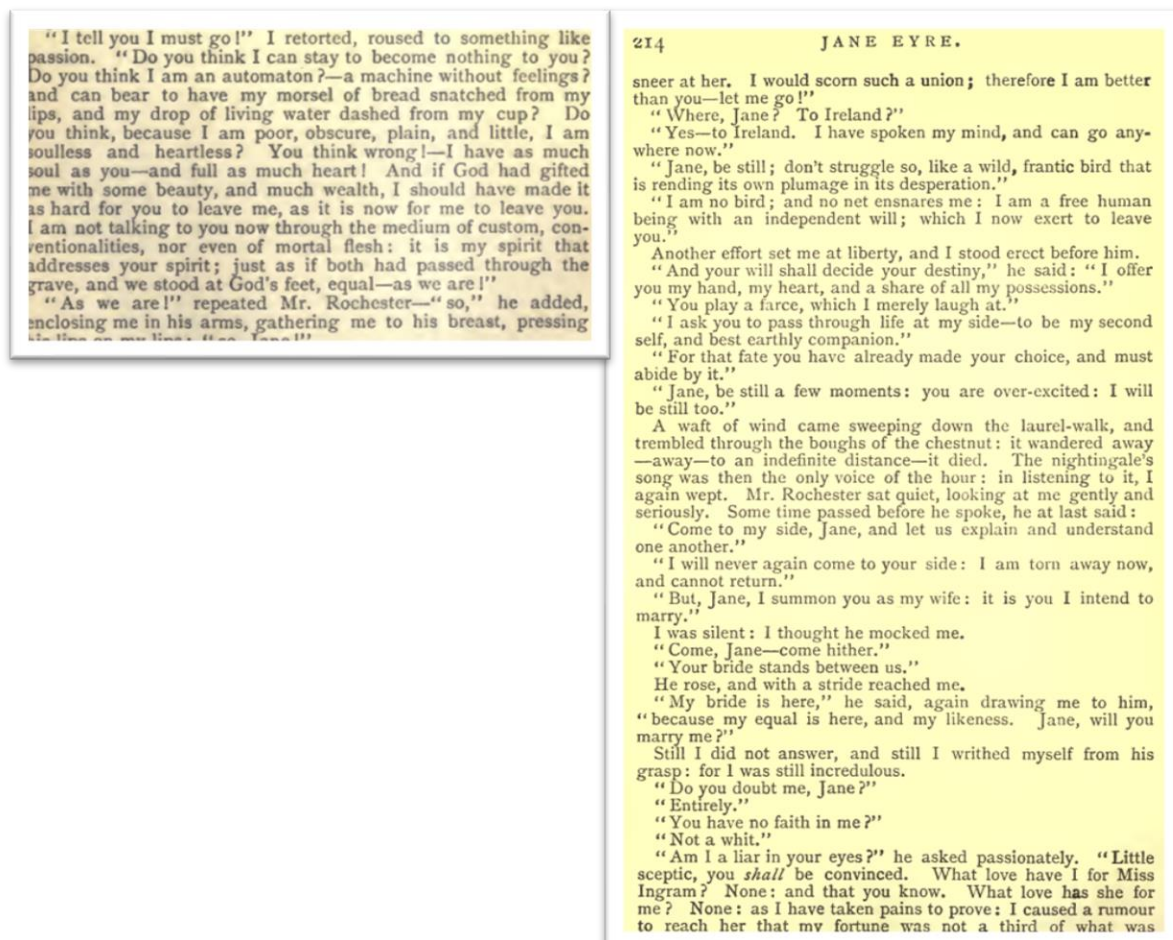
(Brontë 157)

Bazin observes that “Blanche” could be translated by “blank”, implying a lack of interest. In this excerpt, Rochester’s garment, the “Red cloak” (Brontë 170), is also subject to interpretation, reminiscent of Jane and Rochester’s passion. He endorses the role of a gypsy woman and shatters Blanche Ingram’s hopes of marriage while exerting pressure on Jane to reveal her true feelings, eventually disclosing his own identity. This act serves as an escape from the constraints dictated by his social position, strategically pulling Jane closer into his web “you have been trying to draw me [...] in” (Brontë 170) once more breaking the wall of status and gender. As Mrs Reviron-Piégay suggested when we discussed the passage: “interestingly in this excerpt, Rochester is asking Jane to help him untie his cloak, but metaphorically we could say he needs her to disentangle the imbroglio of his first wedding; here it is a matter of untying the knot rather than of tying it.”

“Well, Jane, do you know me?” asked the familiar voice.  
 “Only take off the red cloak, sir, and then—”  
 “But the string is in a knot—help me.”  
 “Break it, sir.”  
 “There, then—‘Off, ye lendings!’” And Mr. Rochester stepped out of his disguise.  
 “Now, sir, what a strange idea!”  
 “But well carried out, eh? Don’t you think so?”  
 “With the ladies you must have managed well.”  
 “But not with you?”  
 “You did not act the character of a gipsy with me.”  
 “What character did I act? My own?”  
 “No: some unaccountable one. In short I believe you have been trying to draw me out—or in. You have been talking non-

(Brontë 170)

One of the pivotal scenes illustrating this departure from convention occurs when Jane vehemently asserts her emotional depth and rejects the notion of being a soulless automaton in response to Rochester's probing. This dialogue challenges the stereotypical portrayal of women as devoid of depth and emotions, disrupting the expected narrative arc, yet at the same time it also serves as a representation of the obstacles protagonists in a Romance narrative must overcome in the pursuit of a happy ending, embodied by their union through marriage. Indeed, Rochester's declaration of having found true love in Jane, despite societal expectations and differences in status, adds another layer to the narrative. His acknowledgment of Jane's worth beyond societal norms challenges the antagonistic elements typical of Romance plots. In Jane's own declaration that she possesses a soul and heart despite her societal position, Brontë challenges the predefined roles and expectations associated with women in romance narratives.



(Brontë 213, 214)

“Your bride stands between us” (Brontë 214) echoes Jane and Rochester’s biggest hurdle. Indeed, Rochester’s intentions to marry Jane if brought to fruition would end up tarnishing Jane’s reputation and involve her in a bigamous relationship. Therefore, the revelation is setting the stage for the dramatic climax after which Jane upon learning Rochester’s secret past must decide whether to stay with him or leave for Ireland. This pivotal moment poses the question inherent to all Romance plots: Will they, or won’t they?

“I declare the existence of an impediment [...] It simply consists in the existence of a previous marriage. Mr. Rochester has a wife now living [...] Bertha Mason” (Brontë 248). Uttered by Richard Mason, those words unsettle the balance of Jane and Rochester’s love and disrupt the conventional Romance plot, which typically concludes with the main characters happily married.

“That is my wife,” said he. “Such is the sole conjugal embrace I am ever to know such are the endearments which are to solace my leisure hours! And this is what I wished to have,” (laying his hand on my shoulder); “this young girl, who stands so grave and quiet at the mouth of hell, looking collectedly at the gambols of a demon. I wanted her just as a change after that fierce ragout. Wood and Briggs, look at the difference! Compare these clear eyes with the red balls yonder this face with that mask this form with that bulk; then judge me, priest of the gospel and man of the law, and remember, with what judgement ye judge ye shall be judged! Off with you now. I must shut up my prize.” We all withdrew (Brontë 247).

From chapter XXVIII to XXXVII, Jane embarks on a solitary journey in the moors. The marriage finally takes place only after a long period of search and disappointment for both of them. Jane wanders the moor, and finally finds assistance in the Rivers household, ultimately gaining independence from her deceased uncle and a teaching position in the countryside that fails to fulfil her. Meanwhile, Rochester finds himself back with Bertha Mason, whom he despises entirely. Only after she has a vision of Rochester does Jane find a way back to him and they ultimately marry. The marriage of Jane and Rochester, culminates in the famous line, “Reader, I married him” and represents a return to the norm. Yet, the declaration itself, uttered by Jane, a woman, is unusual. It serves as both a resolution and a defiance of conventional closure in romance narratives. The unconventional nature of their union challenges societal norms, questioning the predefined roles of master and servant, and redefining them as “citizens in a state whose population numbers only two” (Boumelha 28). Rochester’s physical disability, he is now a “cripple” (379) is a turning point that enables their union and makes the prospect of marriage possible.



His form was of the same strong and stalwart contour as ever his port was still erect, his hair was still raven-black; nor were his features altered or sunk; not in one year's space, by any sorrow, could his athletic strength be quelled, or his vigorous prime blighted. But in his countenance I saw a change: that looked desperate and brooding—that reminded me of some wronged and fettered wild beast or bird, dangerous to approach at his sullen woe. The caged eagle, whose gold-ringed eyes: cruelty has extinguished, might look as looked that sightless

Then he paused, as if he knew not which way to turn. He lifted his hand and opened his eyelids; gazed blank, and with a straining effort, on the sky, and towards the amphitheatre of trees: one saw that all to him was void darkness. He stretched his right hand (the left arm, the mutilated one, he kept hidden in his bosom); he seemed to wish by touch to gain an idea of what lay around him: he met but vacancy still; for the trees were some yards off where he stood. He relinquished the endeavour, folded his arms, and stood quiet and mute in the rain, now falling fast on his uncovered head. At this moment John approached him from some quarter.

(Brontë 363, 364)

Therefore, the romance plot finally reaches an end, yet only under Jane's conditions. Therefore, by the novel's end Jane is able to voice her grievances to a diminished Rochester from whom she does not depend upon, for thanks to her uncle she is financially independent. The balance of power being completely inverted is what makes possible the qualification of this novel which subverts the plot of romance.

“You speak of friends, Jane?” he asked.  
 “Yes, of friends,” I answered rather hesitatingly: for I knew I meant more than friends, but could not tell what other word to employ. He helped me.  
 “Ah! Jane. But I want a wife.”  
 “Do you, sir?”  
 “Yes: is it news to you?”  
 “Of course: you said nothing about it before.”  
 “Is it unwelcome news?”

(Brontë 375, 376)

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JANE EYRE.

“That depends on circumstances, sir—on your choice.”  
 “Which you shall make for me, Jane. I will abide by your decision.”  
 “Choose then, sir—*her who loves you best.*”  
 “I will at least choose—*her I love best.* Jane, will you marry me?”  
 “Yes, sir.”  
 “A poor blind man, whom you will have to lead about by the hand.”  
 “Yes, sir.”  
 “A crippled man, twenty years older than you, whom you will have to wait on?”  
 “Yes, sir.”  
 “Truly, Jane?”  
 “Most truly, sir.”  
 “Oh! my darling! God bless you and reward you!”  
 “Mr. Rochester, if ever I did a good deed in my life—if ever I thought a good thought—if ever I prayed a sincere and blameless prayer—if ever I wished a righteous wish—I am rewarded now. To be your wife is, for me, to be as happy as I can be on earth.”  
 “Because you delight in sacrifice.”  
 “Sacrifice! What do I sacrifice? Famine for food, expectation for content. To be privileged to put my arms round what I value—to press my lips to what I love—to repose on what I trust: is that to make a sacrifice? If so, then certainly I delight in sacrifice.”  
 “And to bear with my infirmities, Jane: to overlook my deficiencies.”  
 “Which are none, sir, to me. I love you better now, when I can really be useful to you, than I did in your state of proud independence, when you disdained every part but that of the giver and protector.”  
 “Hitherto I have hated to be helped—to be led: henceforth, I feel, I shall hate it no more. I did not like to put my hand into a hireling's, but it is pleasant to feel it circled by Jane's little fingers. I preferred utter loneliness to the constant attendance of servants; but Jane's soft ministry will be a perpetual joy. Jane suits me: do I suit her?”  
 “To the finest fibre of my nature, sir.”  
 “The case being so, we have nothing in the world to wait for: we must be married instantly.”  
 He looked and spoke with eagerness: his old impetuosity was rising.  
 “We must become one flesh without any delay, Jane: there is but the licence to get—then we marry.”

Jane Eyre utters the famous: “Reader, I married him” (Brontë 379) which asserts once more her independence once more, through the use of the pronoun “I” and emphasises her prominent position in the marriage.

Therefore, the most significant departure from Victorian values occurs at the novel’s end, when their marriage becomes possible only through Charlotte Brontë’s writing, portraying Rochester diminished both physically and socially. Therefore, the power dynamics have been inverted and Jane becomes if not superior, at least equal to Rochester. Evolving from a mistreated orphan girl without money to a strong, independent woman with the inheritance of her uncle, who made his fortune in the British colonies, and a teaching position Jane takes the lead in her marriage. Although Rochester proposes, it is Jane who has progressed further, both metaphorically and literally. The lines “Reader, I married him” is a double entendre, providing conventional Victorians with the expected ending while offering hope and an alternative conclusion to a romance that, in the society of Charlotte Brontë, should not have even existed. This perspective is supported by Boumelha, who quotes Ohmann.

As Ohmann puts the case:

‘The life Jane and Rochester live together fails to make connection with the social fabric and resonate there. They are no longer sovereign and slave, master and servant: they are citizens, but citizens of a state whose population numbers only two’.

But in the marginalisation and confinement of the married pair, as in the maiming and loss that alone makes Rochester marriageable, there is surely some interrogation of the romance plot itself and, more particularly, of the forms of teleology and closure that it brings with it (Boumelha 28).

The most challenging limit in this subverted genre created by Charlotte Brontë arises in the interpretation we make of the end. Indeed, some feminist critics perceive Jane’s union with an infirmed Rochester as a setback, reducing her to a home-nurse and an in-between position between servant and wife. The following quote can indeed support that theory: “I took her [Adèle] home with me. I meant to become her governess once more; but I soon found this impracticable; my time and cares were now required by another – my husband needed them all.” (Brontë 380) However, some advocated for a different point of view. Indeed, knowing that ten years into marriage Rochester recovers sight for example, therefore no longer being a cripple, some believed that their relationship was hitherto based on stable grounds. Jane and Rochester, now equals are both madly in love with each other and ready to care for their newborn. A plenitude asserted in Jane’s own words.

I hold myself supremely blest – blest beyond what language can express; because I am my husband’s life as fully as he is mine. No woman was ever nearer to her mate than I am: ever more absolutely bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh. I know no weariness of my Edward’s society: he knows none of mine, anymore than we each do of the

pulsation of the heart that beats in our separate bosoms; consequently, we are ever together. To be together is for us to be at once as free as in solitude, as gay as in company. We talk, I believe, all day long: to talk to each other is but a more animated and an audible thinking. All my confidence is bestowed on him, all his confidence is devoted to me; we are precisely suited in character – perfect concord is the result (Brontë 381).

Their love story is not only conveyed through words but also depicted in the elements described by Charlotte Brontë. Their growing passion is mirrored in the imagery of fire, such as burning candles or a burning fire in the hearth. The weather reflects the emotional climate, with storms during conflicts, as in chapter XXIII, and a “brilliant June morning” (Brontë 217) the next morning when differences have been settled down and Rochester proposes to Jane to her pleasant surprise. “Rain and wind” (Brontë 238) occur again and could be interpreted as a warning of disaster for the reader and Jane for she is to learn Rochester wronged her and is ready to make her embark on a bigamous relationship. When the existence of Bertha Mason becomes common knowledge “Jane Eyre, who had been an ardent, expectant woman almost a bride, [became] a cold, solitary girl again: her life was pale; her prospects were desolate.” (Brontë 253) and the “cold” even ice imagery draws a clear contrast with their usual incandescent passion which emphasises once more her hopes of becoming Rochester’s spouse being shattered. It even “snows” (Brontë 317) when Jane is in the presence of John Rivers, a man for whom she does not have neither love nor desire and in that regard eventually refuses to marry: “I repeat: I freely consent to go with you as your fellow-missionary; but not as your wife; I cannot marry you and become part of you.” (Brontë 343). In Jane’s opinion John Rivers is even “as cold as an iceberg” (375) whereas she compares Rochester to the “brightest fire” (Brontë 124). On that specific subject of a correlation between weather and feelings in *Jane Eyre* Claire Bazin said that: “The osmosis between the outside world, the ‘landscape’ and Jane’s inner feeler, her ‘soulcape’ is complete”<sup>50</sup> (Bazin 67).

Thanks to the study of the Romance plot in *Jane Eyre* we shall get a better grasp of the visual metaphors, shots and angles used in the two film adaptations under scrutiny. Indeed, as we shall study in 2.2.1. The Adaptation of the Romance Plot, both adaptations chose to transpose this salient plot to cinema yet each using different techniques stemming from diverging motivations.

As we transition from the examination of the romance plot in *Jane Eyre*, characterised by its subversion of traditional gender roles, we delve into another compelling aspect of Charlotte Brontë’s narrative, the Bildungsroman plot. In doing so, we acknowledge the

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<sup>50</sup> *L’osmose entre le paysage extérieur « landscape » et le paysage intérieur « soulcape » de Jane est complète.*

complex interplay between the romance and bildungsroman genres, as highlighted by the insightful observations of Penny Boumelha: “Bildung and romance are played off against one another in such a way as to suggest the inadequacy of either and the apparent narrative incompatibility of the two” (Boumelha 35). This interplay of genres becomes a driving force in the narrative, offering a more comprehensive exploration of Jane’s experiences. It reflects Brontë’s deliberate choice to capture the complexity of Jane’s journey, acknowledging that a singular genre cannot fully encapsulate her multifaceted growth.

### 1.2.3. The Bildungsroman’s Plot<sup>51</sup>

#### 1.2.3.1. Definition of the Bildungsroman Plot

“[*Jane Eyre*] is also a *Bildungsroman* in which we see the character’s maturity grow in the face of hardship, until she becomes increasingly independent and self-reliant.” (Grellet 118)

Therefore, *Jane Eyre* also draws on another conventional plot structure in Victorian times, the Bildungsroman plot also known as the “hero’s plot of vocation” (Boumelha 14). This narrative plot, traditionally associated with male characters, revolves around the protagonist’s personal development. Typically, it features a male figure who is “slightly outside of society but has great ability and personal ambition and the plot usually ends with social accommodation and often sometimes with marriage as well” (Laird).<sup>52</sup> Therefore, by the end of the narrative, the central figure, initially portrayed as an outcast, becomes socially integrated. Yet, contrary to the romance plot, the end does not have to be necessarily one that ends with marriage, marriage does not in fact constitute a mandatory component of this narrative compared to the previous narrative genre we just delved into. It rather draws an emphasis on “a sense of identity and clearer understanding” (Grellet 126) on the protagonist’s part. The evolution of the protagonist is visible through time for usually it is a novel which “recounts the childhood and young adulthood of a character in order to show how he or she develops and changes through experience and spiritual crisis” (Grellet 126).

Referred to as *Bildungsroman* this narrative genre can endorse various terms such as Apprenticeship novel or even *Entwicklungsroman* (“novel of development”) as well as

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<sup>51</sup> P. Boumelha defined the Heroine’s plot as the Romance plot and the Hero’s plot as the Bildungsroman plot. However, as C. Brontë broke free from the gentrification of plots in *Jane Eyre* I sometimes use the term Heroine’s plot to talk about the Bildungsroman as revised by C. Brontë.

<sup>52</sup> Laird, Heather. *Women and Literature*, Ireland, University College of Cork, 2022.



*Erziehungsroman* (“novel of education”) (Grellet 126). One thing is for certain is that they all encompass the same meaning and flourished, according to Françoise Grellet, in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, drawing inspiration from “earlier Education novels” (Grellet 126) that provided young boys and girls with models to emulate in their lives. Although the Bildungsroman often referred a male-centred story, such as in Charles Dickens’s *David Copperfield* (1850) hence the denomination of the Hero’s plot, it quickly expanded like the apprenticeship novel to encompass stories about women and girls such as our own protagonist Jane Eyre.

### 1.2.3.2. The Bildungsroman in *Jane Eyre*

The coming-of-age story is one marked by various aims. One of them, as discussed by Penny Boumelha is the use made by women writers who utilised this plot to explore women’s experiences of self-discovery and empowerment. “Women writers used the Bildungsroman to explore women’s experience of growth, self-discovery and empowerment” (Boumelha 12). Additionally, she asserts that it even became an act of rebellion to use this narrative genre with a female main character: “The novel of self-discovery, or the bildungsroman, becomes a potent genre in the hands of women writers who use it to explore the constraints that limit women’s personal growth and social and economic mobility” (Boumelha 33). In this regard, *Jane Eyre* stands out as the face of female empowerment in literature. Boumelha argues that the 1847 novel is a “radical bildungsroman” which presents a new model of female selfhood and independence. She notes that Brontë uses the bildungsroman plot to assert her own identity and defy the societal constraints that limit her freedom: “*Jane Eyre* is a Bildungsroman that charts the progress of a young woman towards independence and self-fulfilment... [Brontë] creates a new kind of heroine who defies social expectations and carves out a space for herself in a world that seeks to marginalize and silence her” (Boumelha 55). Therefore, it could be a bit of a shock for Victorian readers, as it could be perceived as undermining Victorian values, especially those associated with women such as the separate spheres. Yet as mentioned before, we still ought to keep in mind that Charlotte Brontë, through *Jane Eyre*, did not entirely push against all Victorian values and is at times a bit complacent with the latter, such as the one of the fallen woman, which Jane narrowly escapes by refusing to marry Rochester and dedicating her last words to John Rivers, the very face of respect for Victorian religion and morality. However, Claire Bazin responded to this when she argued that: “While Jane respects the dictates of morality and religion, she nonetheless denounces their excesses, through the characters of Brocklehurst, Helen Burns and St John,

whose ideals are impractical”<sup>53</sup> (Bazin 10).

### 1.2.3.3. Key Events in Relation to the Bildungsroman in *Jane Eyre*

Nonetheless, Claire Bazin, recognises in *Jane Eyre* a clear and effective feminist resonance of a protagonist in search for an identity. In her opinion there is a clear coming-of-age pattern around which the whole novel revolves.

[Indeed, she declares that:] The narrative pattern is particularly clear in *Jane Eyre*, which is built around five chronological narrative units, each emblematic of a house with a name that is always highly symbolic, following the model of the Bildungsroman: the ontological is built on and through the geographical. Each unit marks a step – both literal and psychological, both logical and chronological – in the heroine's journey, which we follow from her young years to adulthood. The story is told by Jane, both adult narrator and actress, in a long retrospective. It is only at the end of the novel that narration and history coincide, following the model of Dickens or George Eliot (Bazin 8)<sup>54</sup>

Jane Eyre's journey begins in an uncomfortable space for her. The reader first encounters Jane as a young orphan girl who prefers the solace of staying indoors and within her own thoughts rather than venturing into the world or engaging with her mistreaters, her aunt Mrs Reed and her cousins, whom she describes as “wicked and cruel” (10) who are dismissive of her. Her marginalisation extends to the social sphere, as she is constantly reminded of her dependence on the Reed family.

You have no business to take our books; you are a dependent, mamma 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, and eat the same meals we do, and wear clothes at our mamma's expense. Now I'll teach you to rummage my bookshelves: for they are mine; all the house belongs to me, or will do in a few years. Go and stand by the door, out of the way of the mirror and the windows (Brontë 10) (Emphasis mine)

As suggested by Claire Bazin (13), Jane perceives herself as “alien” (Brontë 15, 57) and a “discord in Gateshead Hall” (Brontë 14). Her social and physical inferiority appear to be the cause of her distress and ill treatment according to Jane.

I know that had I been a sanguine, brilliant, careless, exacting, handsome, romping child

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<sup>53</sup> Si Jane respecte les dictats de la morale et de la religion, elle n'en dénonce pas moins les excès, au travers des personnages de Brocklehurst, mais aussi d'Helen Burns et de St John, dont les idéaux sont impraticables.

<sup>54</sup> Le schéma narratif est particulièrement clair dans *Jane Eyre*, construit sur cinq unités narratives chronologiques, chacune emblématique par une demeure au nom toujours très symbolique, selon le modèle du Bildungsroman : l'ontologique se construit sur et par le géographique. Chaque unité marque un pas – tant littéral que psychologique, tant logique que chronologique – dans l'itinéraire de l'héroïne, que l'on suit de ses débuts à l'âge adulte. L'histoire est racontée par Jane, à la fois narratrice adulte et actrice en une longue retrospective. Ce n'est qu'à la fin du roman que narration et histoire coïncident, selon le modèle de Dickens ou de George Eliot.

though equally dependent and friendless Mrs. Reed would have endured my presence more complacently; her children would have entertained for me more of the cordiality of fellow-feeling; the servants would have been less prone to make me the scape-goat of the nursery (Brontë 14).

An particular event at Gateshead marks the place in which Jane undergoes her first psychological evolution. Indeed, Bazin compares the enclosed space of the red room to female intimacy, where Jane undergoes a “necessary rite of passage”<sup>55</sup>. Interestingly, Bazin notes the symbolic homophony between the terms *born* and *borne* in “I was borne upstairs” (Brontë 11). This extract reaches its end when Jane experiences a “small death”<sup>56</sup> (Bazin 16), “I suppose I had a species of fit: unconsciousness closed the scene.” a necessary step for the emergence of a more “peaceful and submissive Jane”<sup>57</sup> to be born (Bazin 16).

She then transitions to a new environment when recruited by Brocklehurst to join the Lowood boarding school. However, it becomes evident that she leaves one prison to enter another, as she “falls from Gateshead to Lowood”<sup>58</sup> (Bazin 14). There, her social inferiority continues to be emphasised, as she is exposed to the entire school as a liar unworthy of trust, with whom no one is allowed to talk. She becomes a prisoner, humiliated by her gaoler.<sup>59</sup> Despite this, Jane transforms each humiliating into an act of rebellion and self-advocacy. At first, she describes her situation passively, stating, “There was I, then, mounted aloft: I, who had said I could not bear the shame of standing on my natural feet in the middle of the room, was now exposed to general view on a pedestal of infamy” (Brontë 57-58). Yet, Jane becomes active: “I mastered the rising hysteria, lifted up my head and took a firm stand on the stool” (Brontë 58). In that moment Jane exhibits a strong sense of self and a tenacious character, as noted by Bazin: “from enemy or refuge, the stool becomes a throne”<sup>60</sup> (Bazin 21). Thus, through the red-room and the stool scenes, the initial stages of Jane Eyre’s life, Charlotte Brontë exposes Jane’s naturally rebellious character, which she must eventually shed in the process of becoming a respected Victorian woman: “Jane learns how not to be” (Bazin 23). Jane only blooms out into adulthood upon the departure of Miss Temple, a surrogate mother for Jane, and the death of her dear, and only friend, Helen Burns. Yet, even though along them she learned how to ease her expectations, her passion is dormant and only awaits the right time to burst out, she indeed sometimes longs for more:

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<sup>55</sup> *Rite de passage nécessaire à sa transformation.*

<sup>56</sup> *Petite mort.*

<sup>57</sup> *Jane apaisée et soumise.*

<sup>58</sup> *Jane tombe de Gateshead en Lowood.*

<sup>59</sup> Bazin describes Brocklehurst as a wolf for Jane, a wolf who drags her into a dangerous wood hence she explains the designation of Lo/wood (Bazin 17).

<sup>60</sup> *D’ennemi ou de refuge, le tabouret devient le trône.*

I went to my window, opened it, and looked out. There were the two wings of the building; there was the garden: there were the skirts of Lowood; there was the hilly horizon. My eye passed all other objects to rest on those most remote, the blue peaks. It was those I longed to surmount; all within their boundary of rock and heath seemed prison-ground, exile limits. I traced the white road winding round the base of one mountain and vanishing in a gorge between two. How I longed to follow it further! (Brontë 72)

When still at Lowood, Jane answered an advertisement for a position of governess at Thornfield. Therefore, Jane's journey continues at Thornfield. There she encounters Rochester, even though at first true to herself and advocating for herself as in: "if God had gifted me with some beauty and much wealth, I should have made it as hard for you to leave me, as it is now for me to leave you" (Brontë 281) she eventually succumbs to Rochester. In his company, she learns to be more submissive and willing to conform to his desires, even allowing him to shape her appearance. She becomes a puppet in the hand of her puppeteer who is no other than her husband to be. Indeed, he moulds her into another woman whom he feels more comfortable marrying; for instance, he forces on her clothes she does not feel comfortable wearing. Just as with Antoinette, whose name he changed into BM, Rochester baptizes Jane, calling her "Jane Rochester" twice (Brontë 217, 218); imposing himself as the one holding the reins. In that regard, even if she refuses to change her physical appearance several times, he forces his will on her and calls on his banker so that she can buy and wear what he sees fit.

This very day I shall take you in the carriage to Millcote, and you must choose some dresses for yourself. I told you we shall be married in four weeks. The wedding is to take place quietly, in the church down below yonder; and then I shall waft you away at once to town. After a brief stay there I shall bear my treasure to regions nearer the sun; to French vineyards and Italian plains: and she shall see whatever is famous in old story and in modern record: she shall taste, too, of the life of cities: and she shall learn to value herself by just comparison with others." "Shall I travel? and with you, sir?"

[...]

Jane: you please me, and you master me, you seem to submit, and I like the sense of pliancy you impart; and while I am twining the soft, silken skein round my finger, it sends a thrill up my arm to my heart (Brontë 218-220).

Although she is an integral part of the marriage, he suffocates her and leaves her no room to be herself. Surprisingly, for a husband and wife to be, the personal pronoun that could unify them, "we", is never used. Instead, Rochester extensively uses the pronoun "I", imposing himself over her, diminishing her to a deictic "you" or a possessive "my". This reveals how little space is left for her to flourish in their marriage. The climax of her submission is when, conscious of her role, she takes a step towards the new role of being in the shoes of the wife *of* Rochester when she asks, "Shall I travel?". This is an admission of the dispossession of her own body and will. To quote C. Bazin, Jane transitions from one prison,

Gateshead, to another, Lowood, to finally end up in a third and more insidious one, Thornfield.

Yet, she decides to cut her strings: “Mr Rochester, I must leave you [...] I must leave Adèle and Thornfield. I must part with you for my whole life: I must begin a new existence amongst strange faces and strange scenes.” (Brontë 254-255) In that moment, she is “not afraid [and] fe[els] an inward power” (Brontë 255). However, the decision comes after an inner battle.

I wrestled with my own resolution: I wanted to be weak that I might avoid the awful passage of further suffering I saw laid out for me; and conscience turned tyrant, held passion by the throat, told her tauntingly she had yet but dipped her dainty foot in the slough, and swore that with that arm of iron, he would thrust her down to unsounded depths of agony (Brontë 250).

Thus, morality and conscience take over again, bringing her time at Thornfield to a close. She refuses to become a fallen woman when she turns her head and refuses to lower her position to become his mistress.

I turned my face away, and put his aside. ‘What! How is this?’ he exclaimed hastily. ‘Oh, I know! you won’t kiss the husband of Bertha Mason? You consider my arms filled, and my embraces appropriated?’ ‘At any rate, there is neither room nor claim for me, sir’ (Brontë 252).

The closing of the Thornfield chapter gives rise to a new beginning for Jane, preceded by a physical and mental wandering: “Jane’s wandering on the moor is a literal echo of her mental wandering”<sup>61</sup> (Bazin 29). A new chapter of her life opens up to her in the form of the Rivers’ house, Moorhouse, which she reaches with great difficulty and in critical health. The Rivers, as their name suggests, act as a source of life (Bazin 29). John Rivers is an anti-Rochester, in the sense that he is all religious and a believer of self-sacrifice as proven by his refusal to engage in a relationship with a woman, despite feeling attraction towards Rosamond Oliver. There, Jane acquires independence as a teacher for the children of the countryside. Although she does not find bliss in her new position, she nonetheless lives by herself and at her own expense. This highlights the limited resources women had to make a living during that time, as mentioned earlier in this research paper. Women, of the lower class or of the lower-middle class, could either become governesses or teachers to earn a living without losing too much social status. Therefore, Jane’s strong will provides her with a temporary situation, but luck provides her with a long-term solution: she becomes an heiress with

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<sup>61</sup> *L’errance de Jane sur la lande est un écho littéral de son errance mentale.*

enough to sustain her and her new family, the Rivers, for life.

Merely to tell you that your uncle, Mr. Eyre of Madeira, is dead; that he has left you all his property, and that you are now rich – merely that nothing more. / I! rich? / Yes, you, rich – quite an heiress (Brontë 321).

When Jane hears Rochester's voice, she leaves Moorhouse and heads for Thornfield. Unlike her departure from Thornfield, Jane's departure from Moorhouse is of her own free will and is based on a deep and conscious desire to live with Rochester. Thornfield has burned: "Incandescent passions perish from their own excess"<sup>62</sup> (Bazin 30). Bertha, the mad wife in the attic, is presented as the sole reason for such an outcome and she has dragged Rochester down with her. "It is the reduced status of Rochester that enables the final dissolution of one form of closure" (Boumelha 26). According to Bazin, their union was only made possible because Rochester also went through several steps of progress, the last of which is his mutilation, "paradoxically help[ing] him see better". In their union Jane reached the end of her "pilgrim's path" (Bazin 30).

The fire that ravages the house is both destructive and purifying. The isomorphism between Rochester and his house reaches its climax here: exorcising the dangerous power means destroying Thornfield, but it also means mutilating the hero; this mutilation is particularly significant; losing a hand and going blind, Rochester is emasculated [...] this wild, destructive fire has, in its fury, annihilated itself, and Jane, the guardian angel, will be able to revive the flame among the ashes, but a subdued flame: "His countenance reminded one of a lamp quenched, waiting to be relit" (Brontë 370) (Bazin quoting Bertrandias 33).<sup>63</sup>

The only fly in the ointment are the last words of St John Rivers, the man of God, who regains control, a control he has in fact never lost, which is not to the displeasure of a puritanical Victorian readership devoted to God (Bazin 36).

St. John is unmarried: he never will marry now. Himself has hitherto sufficed to the toil; and the toil draws near its close: his glorious sun hastens to its setting. The last letter I received from him drew from my eyes human tears, and yet filled my heart with Divine joy: he anticipated his sure reward, his incorruptible crown. I know that a stranger's hand will write to me next, to say that the good and faithful servant has been called at length into the joy of his Lord. And why weep for this? No fear of death will darken St. John's last hour; his mind will be unclouded; his heart will be undaunted; his hope will be sure; his faith steadfast. His own words are a pledge of this. "My Master," he says, "has forewarned me. Daily He announces more distinctly – 'Surely I come quickly!' And hourly I more eagerly respond – 'Amen: even so come, Lord Jesus!'" (Brontë 382)

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<sup>62</sup> *Les passions incandescentes périssent de leur propre excès.*

<sup>63</sup> *Le feu qui ravage la demeure est alors le feu destructeur et aussi le feu purificateur. L'isomorphie entre Rochester et sa maison trouve ici son aboutissement : exorciser la puissance dangereuse, c'est détruire Thornfield, mais c'est aussi mutiler le héros; cette mutilation est particulièrement significative; perdant une main et devenant aveugle, Rochester est émasculé [...] ce feu sauvage et destructeur s'est dans sa furie, anéanti lui-même et Jane, l'ange gardien, va pouvoir faire renaître la flamme parmi les cendres, mais une flemme assagie.*

As stated in the definition of the Bildungsroman genre, this narrative is considered complete once the protagonist achieves both social acceptance and a sense of identity. However, in Jane's case, she only needs to convince the external world, as she has nurtured a strong sense of self from the beginning. She views herself as a lady superior, defying Victorian reader's expectations. The hero's plot is distorted and now depicts the journey of a woman with a profound sense of superiority, even as an orphan girl with no secure condition. Bessie supports Jane's self-perception of superiority acknowledging her as a lady: "Oh you are quite a lady. Miss Jane! I knew you would be" (Brontë 78), and Jane later authorises it unequivocally: "Bessie Leaven had said I was quite a lady; and she spoke truth: I was a lady (Brontë 132)" (Boumelha 70).

Despite, occasional economic and social dependence, Jane's perception of her own class status remains steadfast: "Her 'perceptions of her own class status have been unwavering, she has from the first rejected the possibility of 'belonging to poor people'" (Boumelha 24). She maintains it even in dire conditions. Penniless and in a state of starvation, she does not wish to be confused with a beggar. Yet, that is indeed what she is doing, she is begging her way into Diana and Mary's household. Even then, she believes that the servant Hannah errs in "supposing [her] a beggar. [she is] no beggar; any more than [her] or [her] young ladies" (Brontë 287). In those lines, Jane elevates herself above the servant Hannah while positioning herself on the same level as Diana and Mary.

Therefore, according to Boumelha: "Jane, [...] is not what she seems, no beggar even when she is undeniably begging, and that is because she is naturally a lady" (Boumelha 70). Thus, Jane's confidence is unshakeable as she distances herself from social class and rather evokes her own self-perception of being a natural lady. However, Boumelha counters this assertion, stating that "nothing [...] comes naturally for Jane" (Boumelha 7) which contradicts what Jane seems to assert. For instance, Rochester "hopes that in time [she] will learn to be natural with [him]" (Brontë 118). Only their union at the novel's end confirms her sense of self-worth by securing her the social position she indeed already felt within.

This self-assertion of being naturally a lady implies some bias against other people. If she is naturally a lady, others, like the marginalised like Bertha or as in the aforementioned example Hannah, are naturally deemed inferior and less worthy of humanity. This further excludes them and consequently silences or diminishes them, as provided by the examples of the othering and demonisation of Bertha, pictured almost as a "vampire" (Bazin 45): "She sucked the blood: she said she'd drain my heart" (Brontë 179). This marginalisation thus

stands as one of the major limits present in Charlotte Brontë's Bildungsroman for as explained by Boumelha: "Bertha's 'pigmy intellect' and 'giant propensities' result from 'a nature the most gross, impure, depraved I ever saw' (Brontë 258); and mistresses are 'often by nature, and always by position, inferior' (Brontë 262)" (Boumelha 71). This might explain, Jane's natural refusal to become Rochester's mistress and consequently be part of the inferiors.

The limits of Charlotte Brontë's Bildungsroman also surface in different forms. As mentioned earlier, some have celebrated Jane's achievements and, consequently, hailed the advent of a feminist novel:

Hermione Lee calls [*Jane Eyre*] an epic of self-determinations [she notes Jane's] painful acquisition of identity 'I am Jane Eyre' (Brontë 195, 366), of independence 'I am independent, sir, as well as rich: I am my own mistress' (Brontë 367), and of a marriage of equals 'I am my husband's life as fully as he is mine' (Brontë 381) (Boumelha 60)

Still, numerous debates stemmed from *Jane Eyre*. For instance, Boumelha criticises those who overlook the Bildungsroman failure in representing a broader spectrum of women and believes that they vouch for "class and race blind interpretations" (Boumelha 60). To buttress her argumentation Boumelha appeals to other critics' authority.

Lee R. Edwards argues that 'Jane is rather a displaced spiritual aristocrat': Politi analyses how 'the narrative together with the girl-child will grow from revolted marginality to quiescent socialisation, reblending the contradictions which it initially exposed, thus securing its survival through the convention of a 'happy ending'; and Weissman concludes that 'the end of the book reveals the first half for what it is not the rage of the Romantic radical who wants justice, but the rage of the outsider who just wants to get in' (Boumelha 60)

Boumelha argues that once we have a clearer understanding of the limits at the core of *Jane Eyre*, we should then draw our attention to "those other women whose stories are occluded" (Boumelha 60).

For example, to Bessie, female servant whose tales and ballads are Jane's alternative education, in orphanhood, in class position, and in narrating: to Grace Poole working-class woman who guards the secrets of female delinquency and 'giant propensities' (Brontë 258) in the heart of the 'gentleman's manor-house' (Brontë 84); and, above all, to Bertha Mason Rochester. Berthe: not only madwoman in the attic, after all, but also skeleton in the closet, the 'dark' secret, the maddening burden of imperialism concealed in the heart of every English gentleman's house of the time [...] Maddening but not maddened: the intrinsic, racial/familial nature of Bertha's 'moral madness' serves to exculpate Rochester, and with him the English gentry class, from so much as complicity in her plight (Boumelha 61) (Emphasis mine).

Incidentally, Boumelha chooses to write both of Bertha's last names; she does not deny Bertha her identity or her past, as Rochester might have done on several occasions. She even puts her maiden name first, even though none of the characters, not even Jane, do so in the novel. However, Boumelha nuances her remarks and does not overly criticise the



contribution made by *Jane Eyre* to the Victorian society in which the book was first published. In listing the limitations, she ensures, or at least urges, other women writers not to replicate the same issues: “The point is that contemporary feminist criticism must not, surely, reproduce the silences and occlusions of nineteenth-century English culture in allowing the white, middle-class woman to stand as its own ‘paradigmatic woman’” (Boumelha 63). Therefore, the real difficulty in studying the Bildungsroman genre in *Jane Eyre* is to celebrate what deserves to be celebrated without occulting in turn the stories of other marginalised figures, the same goes when studying adaptations as we shall do through R. Stevenson’s 1943 *Jane Eyre* and C.J. Fukunaga’s 2011 one.

In that sense, Boumelha notices not just the limits, but also the new paths opened up by Brontë. One of them is the path to matriarchy: “It has been suggested that there is a matriarchal story within *Jane Eyre*, of Jane’s turning to and learning from mother figures” (Boumelha 64) quoting E. Showalter, who “has remarked on the fact that *Jane Eyre* is virtually peopled with female surrogates for absent powerful males – Mrs Reed, Miss Temple, Mrs Fairfax, Grace Poole” (Brontë 66). In that regard, Mrs Reed would be the image of bad mothering, Miss Temple of a patient one, even though she abandons Jane to get married. This could be interpreted as a failure of matriarchy in the face of a prevalent patriarchy. The recurring figure of the moon, often associated with women, is a recurring figure from which Jane often draws her strongest decisions. The last one is Mother Nature, as Jane intends to “seek her breast and ask repose” (Brontë 272). However, according to Boumelha, her confidence in Mother Nature is not conclusive, for “this universal mother proves [...] to be without nourishment, Mothers and daughters stand in somewhat fraught relations” (Boumelha 67). Matriarchy does not appear convincing since, by the novel’s end, Jane, like Miss Temple before her, turns to patriarchy in the figure of Rochester. However, another argument might also be that in time she might be at the head of her family, supplanting Rochester for authority and consequently implementing a matriarchy in her home, in which their son will evolve and he could, in turn, pass down some of her values. Also, matriarchy is only a nuanced failure for it is Jane who recalls her own story and takes agency in telling what comes across as her own story. Thus, we could say that the failures only prove that Charlotte Brontë kept the achievements of her female protagonist on a realistic scale for her time.

Boumelha does not see it that way and rather views Jane as a tool in the hand of a systemic patriarchy.

The plot trajectory [...] takes Jane from exile to keeper of the keys, from *déclassée* to lady, from outcast of family structure to restorer and vessel of patrilineage (‘the boy had

inherited his own eyes' (Brontë 382)) from defence of the necessity and dignity of work to mystique of the woman's calling (Boumelha 73).

Apart from the necessary debates surrounding the space accorded to women in *Jane Eyre*, the hero's plot still is a success in terms of a woman's exploration and agency.

In the course of the novel Jane has three jobs, five homes, three families of a sort, two proposals of marriage. If her travel is restricted, at least she nearly goes to the South of France, nearly goes to Madeira, nearly goes to India. She learns French, German and Hindustani. She lives alone, receives male visitors in her bedroom in the middle of the night and hears confidences of financial treachery and sexual profligacy. She saves a life, proposes marriage and gives away thousands of pounds (Boumelha 75).

*Jane Eyre* employs both the heroine's plot and the hero's plot structures. It is precisely this combination of conventional plot structures that rendered the Victorian novel unsettling and unconventional at that time. The intertwining of the romance and the bildungsroman's plot is a distinctive element that makes the novel unique, unusual, and groundbreaking for its era. This interplay significantly influences various aspects of the novel, particularly the representation of Jane's struggle to achieve agency. While this aspect does rely on the bildungsroman's plot, Jane's agency had to be limited, as an excess of it could easily have endangered the fruition of the Romance plot. Indeed, the marriage is part and parcel of the Romance plot and an overzealous Jane could have led to a vengeful one, which would have prevented the romance plot from reaching its intended conclusion that is marriage, albeit part and parcel of the romance plot. In the second part of my master dissertation, we will see whether the fragile, yet necessary balance of plots achieved by C. Brontë with great precision and skill is respected in order to allow Jane's access to her desired status particularly through the Bildungsroman's Plot in 2.2.2. The Adaptation of the Bildungsroman Plot.

#### 1.2.4. The Plot of Desire

##### 1.2.4.1. Definition of the Plot of Desire

"The story of female desire conduces to unimaginable ends; desire can be the name of what is left unaccounted for and undomesticated by these forms of closure [the romance and Bildungsroman plot]" (Boumelha 20)

According to Boumelha's interpretation of *Jane Eyre*, the third main plot is the plot of Desire. It can encompass a sexual desire, but it is not limited to it. It is rather more a form of desire that lacks a definitive end point. The desire in itself is paramount, nothing specific is to be attained. What matters is the longing, the drive for something not even precisely formulated, and not satisfied by the outcomes of either the Romance or Bildungsroman's plot.

And then there is a third story: what I should like to call the plot of desire. [...] For Armstrong, though, desire seems to be inextricably linked to sexuality. I want here to use it in a larger sense, as a longing for something (quite probably unformulated) which is different, other, more, than what is available. In this sense, the desire of the woman seems to me to be an important locus of social critique and, sometimes, of envisioned social transformation (Boumelha 19).

In that way, the plot of desire is less conventional, and readers are not familiar with it; it can be quite unsettling at first. Jane endorses that narrative genre, as she often portrays restlessness, a longing for something other, more and different, often unspecified and beyond grasp, and certainly marriage.

In her class, H. Laird associates the plot of desire with writers like Byron and Shelley, figures of romanticism but this plot goes beyond anything that seems easily accessible. H. Laird talks about a “sort of logic insufficiency” because the desire could be simply for “something that is around you, not even something that you necessarily know you want, you just want more, you just want other than what is there, different” (Laird). Nothing can quite satisfy that.

To better grasp the concept, we can turn our attention to a more recent adaptation of that genre, as in the recent hit film *Barbie* by Greta Gerwig<sup>64</sup> and Noah Baumbach, which exemplifies precisely what the plot of desire is, that is not to have an ending but a want for something, for more, without being able to clearly verbalise what that is.

Daughter: - What about Barbie? / CEO manager: - What do you mean? / Daughter: - What's her ending? What does she get? / CEO manger: - Well that's easy, she is in love with Ken. / Daughter: - That is *not* her ending! / CEO manager: - Rrrrhuuum / Barbie: - I am not in love with Ken. / CEO manager: - What do *you* want? / Barbie: I don't know, I am... I am not really sure where I belong anymore. [pause] I don't think I have an ending. / Ruth, Inventor of Barbie: - That was always the point! I created you so you wouldn't have an ending (*Barbie*)

#### 1.2.4.2. The Plot of Desire in *Jane Eyre*

The plot of desire, as exemplified by Charlotte Brontë permitted a more subversive stance for women's rights. Indeed, the longing for something not precisely formulated, left the door open in women's minds for every male's area to be opened up to them as well, in time. Inscribed in a patriarchal society it gave women the possibility to assert their desires in a society that sought and still seeks today, albeit to a lesser degree, to repress them. Overall, the concept of the “plot of desire” highlights the importance of desire and passion in shaping the

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<sup>64</sup> Gurwig, Greta, *Barbie*, 2023.

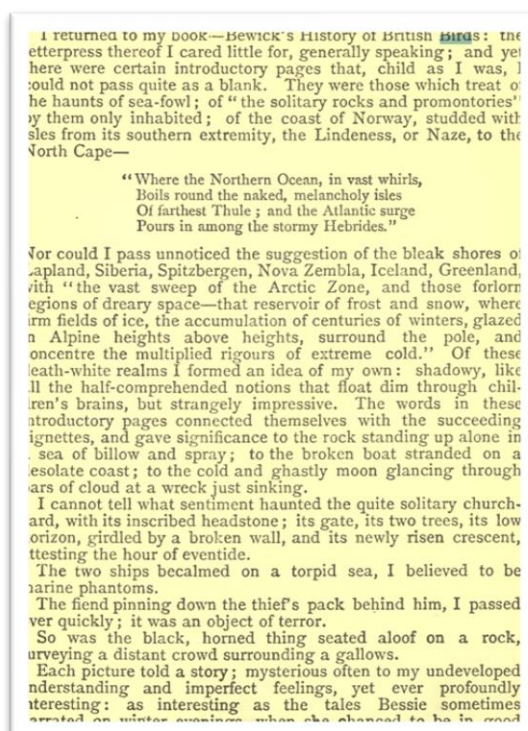
narrative of a novel and the lives of its characters.

[Jane] longs for broader horizons, pleads for a wider range of activities for women, gives an impassioned defence of the right to feeling of those who are 'poor, obscure, plain, and little' (Brontë 213). She suffers, fights back, stands by her principles, vanquishes her enemies, and ends up 'supremely blest' (Brontë 381) (Boumelha 27).

Boumelha also mentions the Gothic genre as a subplot of the plot of *Desire*. Indeed, the gothic elements in the novel, such as the supernatural events, eerie settings, and mysterious characters, contribute to the overall theme of desire and passion between the two main characters, Jane, and Mr. Rochester. The gothic elements in the novel create an atmosphere of suspense and mystery, which heightens the tension between the two characters and adds to the intensity of their romantic relationship, as well as provide a necessarily odd setting to make the reader believe in a longing for more, even coming from a woman, usually at the margins of a patriarchal society. Thus, the Gothic genre is an important part of the "plot of desire" in *Jane Eyre*, according to Boumelha.

#### 1.2.4.3. Key Events in Relation to the Plot of Desire in *Jane Eyre*

*Jane Eyre* is filled with visual descriptions of Jane exerting her power to make her mind wander above a gate, the horizon essentially making her imagination wander beyond everything that surrounds her. This constant, ever-longing trait of her personality impacts Jane's characterisation. Indeed, from the very beginning C. Brontë instils in her protagonist an interest in birds she cannot not encounter in the areas where she lives. This fascination with illustrations in the bird book is mentioned as such:



(Brontë 8)

orn plate and tart away. Bessie asked if I would have a book: the word *book* acted as a transient stimulus, and I begged her to fetch Gulliver's Travels from the library. This book I had again and again perused with delight. I considered it a narrative of

(Brontë 18)

Her readings, even as a young girl, reveal her true aspirations: more. She yearns to travel, discover, and learn beyond the confines of her immediate surroundings, aspiring to see and understand the world better. From her early years, her mind is eager to expand beyond the walls of her usual habitats, a desire she attempts fulfilling through her exploration of both Bewick's *History of British Birds* and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*.

Jane's own paintings also mirror her desire for more. Whether depicting a shipwreck or an iceberg on a polar winter day, these elements lie beyond her immediate horizon and grasp. She has never embarked on a ship out to the north pole. Through her art, she captures scenes she may anticipate or, at the very least, wishes to witness in her life, she portrays the other world, far away from what she is familiar with but close to what she truly aspires to see in her life.

The mist snowed the pinnacle of an iceberg piercing a polar winter sky: a muster of northern lights reared their dim lances, close serried, along the horizon. Throwing these into distance, rose, in the foreground, a head—a colossal head, inclined towards the iceberg, and resting against it. Two thin hands, joined under the forehead, and supporting it, drew up before the other features a sable veil; a brow quite bloodless, white as bone, and an eye hollow and fixed, blank of meaning, but for the glances of despair, alone was visible. Above the temple

(Brontë 107)

Moreover, numerous are the descriptions in which she constantly attempts to peer out windows, or gaze above and beyond, trying to imagine what lies beyond her horizons. This desire to continually see or transcend what is in her immediate vicinity, along with her longing to go beyond the confines of the walls of Lowood and Thornfield Hall, are prominent aspects of the plot of *Desire*, which plays a decisive role in Jane's characterisation.

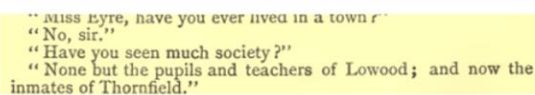
I went to my window, opened it, and looked out. There were the two wings of the building; there was the garden: there were the skirts of Lowood; there was the hilly horizon. My eye passed all other objects to rest on those most remote, the blue peaks. It was those I longed to surmount; all within their boundary of rock and heath seemed prison-ground, exile limits. I traced the white road winding round the base of one mountain and vanishing in a gorge between two. How I longed to follow it further! (Brontë 72) (Emphasis mine)

In this passage, she confides in the reader about her lack of interest in what she can currently see and professes her admiration for things that are beyond her reach. She arrives at the same conclusion in Thornfield. Once again, she expresses a deep “longing” (Brontë 72,

93) for something at present unrealistic.

I climbed the three staircases, raised the trap-door of the attic, and having reached the leads, looked out afar over sequestered field and hill, and along dim sky-line that then I longed for a power of vision which might overpass that limit: which might reach the busy world, towns, regions full of life I had heard of but never seen; that then I desired more of practical experience than I possessed; more of intercourse with my kind, of acquaintance with variety of character, than was here within my reach. I valued what was good in Mrs. Fairfax, and what was good in Adèle; but I believed in the existence of other and more vivid kinds of goodness, and what I believed in I wished to behold (Brontë 93) (Emphasis mine)

Upon Jane's arrival in Thornfield, she envisions embarking on an adventure. However, this adventure is short-lived as she discovers only a tranquil and comfortable home where nothing disrupts her daily chores. This situation causes her pain, and Charlotte Brontë employs the term "inmates", which, in this context, refers to the inhabitants of Thornfield Hall. Nevertheless, it evokes in the reader's mind Jane's sense of being a prisoner in Thornfield Hall, as aforementioned: her new prison.



"Miss Eyre, have you ever lived in a town?"  
"No, sir."  
"Have you seen much society?"  
"None but the pupils and teachers of Lowood; and now the inmates of Thornfield."

(Brontë 104)

On the matter Boumelha suggests that:

Looking is, indeed, a key term in the novel, for this movement of ambivalence is structured around the heroine's attempts to evade the scrutiny and surveillance which threaten to fix her in place, as in the celebrated scene of the double enclosure of the window-seat. But whatever seems to promise expansion proves to offer instead only a new limit to the horizons of Jane's expectations. So, Rochester and his largely unsupervised house, Thornfield Hall, initially provide a space of longing for an unformulated, unembodied utopian future; it is here that Jane's yearning for prospects finds its fullest expression. But the spacious house proves to contain within it a prison for the inarticulate and violent rage of the woman, Bertha (Boumelha 25).

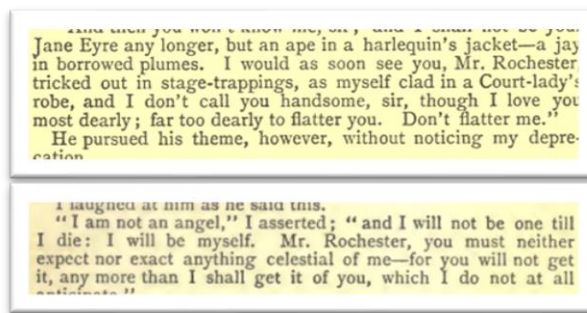
Despite apparent hindrances to her freedom and, consequently, her pursuit of happiness in the form of going beyond her assigned horizons, Jane continues to advocate for herself and her role as a woman. In doing so, she becomes a figure to whom Victorian women could look up. Jane consistently challenges the prevailing codes of domesticity of her time, affirming the legitimacy of women's aspirations for more.

Jane, be still; don't struggle so, like a wild, frantic bird that is rending its own plumage in its desperation. / I am no bird; and no net ensnares me: I am a free human being with an independent will; which I now exert to leave you. (Brontë 214)

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. It is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex (Brontë 93).

Jane now employs the metaphor of the bird to better assert her independence and free will. She knows her aspirations, and being Rochester's mistress has never been part of her desires. The plot of *Desire* comes to characterise Jane. Indeed, the protagonist nurtures a strong sense of self. She uses her voice in the relationship with Rochester to guide him in addressing her, thus reaffirming her robust sense of self. Therefore, Boumelha argues that, through the analysis of these lines, Jane embodies what Frederic Jameson defined as "feminine historicity as the desire on the part of the female subject to enter the historic process and to become an active agent of history" (Jameson in Boumelha 15). Additionally, "Her narrative dramatizes a 'furious' yearning not just for political equality but for equality of desire" (Gilbert in Bloom 104).<sup>65</sup>



(Brontë 218, 219)

However, even though she strives to be recognised as equal, at least in her marriage to Rochester, the latter ignores her wishes and dismisses her. Yet, Jane never stops trying, which in the end portrays her as a determined woman, and Rochester, as he says it himself, as "an ogre, or a ghoul" (Brontë 228). Therefore, restlessness is part and parcel of Jane's characterisation, and she even explains it as being part of her "nature" (Brontë 93).

I shall be called discontented. I could not help it: the restlessness was in my nature; it agitated me to pain sometimes. Then my sole relief was to walk along the corridor of the third story, backwards and forwards, safe in the silence and solitude of the spot, and allow my mind's eye to dwell on whatever bright visions rose before it and certainly they were many and glowing; to let my heart be heaved by the exultant movement which, while it swelled it in trouble, expanded it with life; and best of all to open my inward ear to a tale that was never ended my imagination created, and narrated

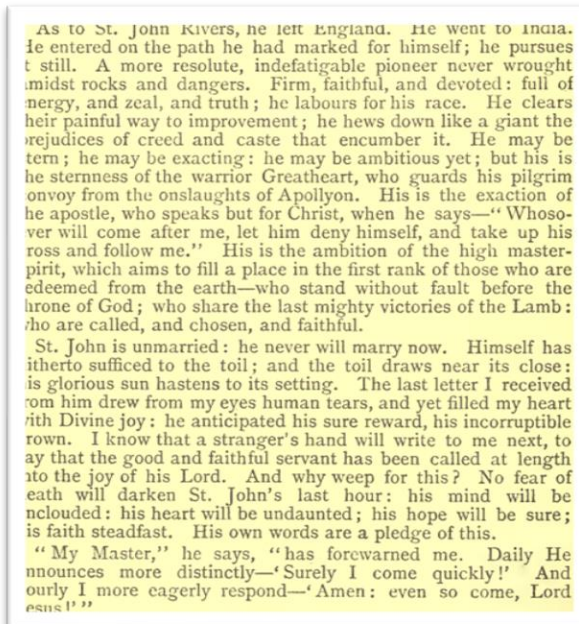
<sup>65</sup> Gilbert, Sandra, "The Secrets of Furious Lovemaking", In Bloom, Harold, "Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*", New-York, Chelsea House, 2017.



continuously: quickened with all of incident, life, fire, feeling, that I desired and had not in my actual existence (Brontë 93) (Emphasis mine)

Thus, “the restlessness that at once fuels and enacts this unspoken story is given a kind of serial focus at each point of her picaresque adventures: ambition, passion, vocation, marriage” (Boumelha 24); we will discuss the subject of marriage within the plot of desire later on.

The longing for more never ceases to inhabit Jane. Even at the end of the novel, when Jane professes her love for Rochester and portrays herself as happily married, the end of her romance as such, she is still imagining what is happening in India, pondering over her cousin’s activities there. To hand over the very last thoughts of her long reminiscing process to St John Rivers proves that she has not reached an end and still yearns for more, as she is still looking beyond her horizons.



As to St. John Rivers, he left England. He went to India. He entered on the path he had marked for himself; he pursues it still. A more resolute, indefatigable pioneer never wrought amidst rocks and dangers. Firm, faithful, and devoted: full of energy, and zeal, and truth; he labours for his race. He clears his painful way to improvement; he hews down like a giant the prejudices of creed and caste that encumber it. He may be stern; he may be exacting: he may be ambitious yet; but his is the sternness of the warrior Greatheart, who guards his pilgrim convoy from the onslaughts of Apollyon. His is the exaction of the apostle, who speaks but for Christ, when he says—"Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." His is the ambition of the high master-pilgrim, which aims to fill a place in the first rank of those who are redeemed from the earth—who stand without fault before the throne of God; who share the last mighty victories of the Lamb: who are called, and chosen, and faithful.

St. John is unmarried: he never will marry now. Himself has hitherto sufficed to the toil; and the toil draws near its close: his glorious sun hastens to its setting. The last letter I received from him drew from my eyes human tears, and yet filled my heart with Divine joy: he anticipated his sure reward, his incorruptible crown. I know that a stranger's hand will write to me next, to say that the good and faithful servant has been called at length into the joy of his Lord. And why weep for this? No fear of death will darken St. John's last hour: his mind will be unclouded: his heart will be undaunted; his hope will be sure; his faith steadfast. His own words are a pledge of this.

"My Master," he says, "has forewarned me. Daily He announces more distinctly—"Surely I come quickly!" And surely I more eagerly respond—"Amen: even so come, Lord Jesus!"

(Brontë 382)

This ending permits the plot of *Jane Eyre* to be non-teleological, as Jane’s restlessness continually unsettles the teleological narrative of the novel, the idea that Jane can be satisfied by something specific. The Romance and Bildungsroman plots, which are teleological, have their specific endpoint in the form of the marriage between Jane and Rochester and social accommodation of Jane through, as aforementioned, the maiming of Rochester and the inheritance of Jane’s uncle’s fortune.



### 1.2.5. The Gothic and Autobiographical Elements

Therefore, the three main plot structures are those of the Romance plot, the Bildungsroman plot, and the plot of Desire. “Though the Gothic novel disappeared as a genre in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, its influence was felt in many novels (*Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre*)” (Grellet 108). Even though the Gothic genre is apart from the three driving plot structures in *Jane Eyre*, it resonates in the novel as a broader theme of the plot of Desire.

Jane Eyre seems, too, to offer a world of physical restriction against which she chafes, continually searching for prospects through windows. And yet, set, against this air of enclosure and restraint there is the intense and startling physicality of the novel its evocation of mental and emotional torment through freezing frosts and blazing fires, the ‘disseverment of bone and vein’ (Brontë 270), floods and shipwrecks, starvation and punishment. Dreams and omens, natural symbols and mystic calls in short the whole panoply of the supernatural are enlisted in the service of what remain, after all, entirely human and secular appetites Jane’s inner life, whatever her modest demeanour, seems to rage across heaven and earth in a kind of cosmic psychodrama (Boumelha 75) (Emphasis mine).

Therefore, the Gothic genre offers the necessary setting for Jane Eyre to express her full sense of desire, and through her, the desires of Victorian women: “It is in the Gothic strain within the realist text that the repression by sequential structure of the unplotable and disorderly force of feminine desire finds expression” (Boumelha 18). Thus, the Gothic genre propels Jane towards new parts of the narration, it advances the unfolding of the narration with elements such as the passage of the “madwoman in the attic” (Gilbert and Gubar), the burning Hall or even the telepathic call.

The Gothic novel is extensively used in the adaptation of C.J. Fukunaga; hence, I chose to develop this genre, its specificities, and the key elements attached to it in *Jane Eyre* in the second part of my master dissertation.

The autobiographical genre is also one to which Charlotte Brontë resorted in a way in *Jane Eyre*. I do not wish to immerse myself fully within it but solely to mention its existence. Indeed, I wish to make clear that even though correlations exist between Charlotte Brontë and her protagonist, notwithstanding, one is fictional and the other real. Thus, as Claire Bazin asserts it, in *Jane Eyre* “the bio interferes with the writing, the life marks the work”<sup>66</sup> (Bazin 1). However, it would be reductive to say that *Jane Eyre* is an autobiography, despite the obvious correlations, such as the love affair between Jane and Rochester, which comes as a

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<sup>66</sup> *Le bio s’immisce dans la graphie, la vie marque l’œuvre.*

response to her frustration with a one-sided love affair Charlotte Brontë had with Constantin Heger in Brussels.

[*Jane Eyre*] was a book born from a series of calamities that led to a crisis in Brontë's life: what she called 'an almost unbearable inner struggle Her heart, 'constantly lacerated by searing regrets,' led Brontë to the discovery that '[o]ne suffers in silence so long as one has the strength and when that strength fails one speaks without measuring one's words too much.' In *Jane Eyre* Brontë found those words, a way to voice her struggle and her pain. She seized upon those things that had hurt, shamed, angered, and compelled her, as well as those desires that she could not control, and transformed them into a fiction which was so profoundly intimate that this publicly reserved, proper, and proud young woman didn't want anyone to know [her] (Pfordresher introduction).

However, on this point, Philippe Lejeune is clear, and *Jane Eyre* does not fulfil the required characteristics to be qualified as an autobiography. The novel's subtitle "An Autobiography" misleads the reader and is not, in fact, a sufficient indicator for *Jane Eyre* to be considered an autobiography.

Although Charlotte Brontë inevitably draws on her personal experience, and makes Jane a first-person narrator, this is impossible for anyone familiar with the author's life, whose name differs from that of her heroine, the first departure from the definition of a "true" autobiography (Lejeune in Bazin 3)<sup>67</sup>

Charlotte Brontë as well refuted the appellation of an autobiographical novel to such an extent that it sparked a quarrel between her and Thackeray.

Brontë denied that there were significant similarities between her life and that of her first-person narrator and heroine. In a particularly funny episode, as late as May 29, 1851, William Makepeace Thackeray enraged her when at the end of a public lecture he cried out, 'Mother, you must allow me to introduce you to Jane Eyre!' Charlotte was so angered by his very public announcement that she was the author of the novel and that the protagonist and narrator were based on her, that she sought out Thackeray the next afternoon to upbraid him. Her publisher, George Smith, accidentally walked in on them as she was dressing down the celebrated author of *Vanity Fair* and was amazed, as he put it, by '[t]he spectacle of this little woman, hardly reaching to Thackeray's elbow, but, somehow, looking stronger and fiercer than himself, and casting her incisive words at his head, [which] resembled the dropping of shells into a fortress' (Pfordresher 13).

Of course, many other plots are to be found in Charlotte Brontë's work, such as the fairy tale.<sup>68</sup> However as mentioned above, the study of these five plot structures, which at first glance have nothing to do with each other, gives us a rather complete, even though not exhaustive, vision of the work *Jane Eyre* to be able to study the works based on this Victorian masterpiece.

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<sup>67</sup> Si Charlotte Brontë s'inspire inévitablement de son expérience personnelle et fait de Jane une narratrice à la première personne, l'équation est impossible pour qui connaît la vie de l'auteur, dont le nom diffère de celui de son héroïne, première entorse à la définition d'une « véritable autobiographie ».

<sup>68</sup> see 2.2. Comparative Study: C.J. Fukunaga and R. Stevenson.

**PART II**  
**The case of R. Stevenson**  
**and**  
**C. J. Fukunaga**

## 2.2. DEFINITIONS

### 2.1.2. Different Forms of Adaptation

Over the years, numerous attempts have been made to transpose the narrative of Charlotte Brontë's novel into alternative mediums. Indeed, "since Brontë first published her bestseller in 1847, there have been at least forty dramas (several of them musicals), nine television versions, and ten movies based on the book" (Gilbert in Bloom 103).

Yet to understand what is at stake when adapting Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, it is necessary to have a look at the fundamental concept of adaptation. Linda Hutcheon, in her work *A Theory of Adaptation*, posits that "an adaptation is an announced and extensive transposition of a particular work or works." (Hutcheon 7).<sup>69</sup> Therefore, an adaptation must first and foremost be clear about its intention to be an adaptation; otherwise, it risks being considered as plagiarism.

[Hutcheon further defines the concept, stating that] this 'transcoding' can involve a shift of medium (a poem to a film) or genre (an epic to a novel), or a change of frame and therefore context: telling the same story from a different point of view, for instance, can create a manifestly different interpretation. Transposition can also mean a shift in ontology from the real to the fictional, from a historical account or biography to a fictionalized narrative or drama" (Hutcheon 8) (Emphasis mine).

An adaptation is also shaped by the "process of both (re-)interpretation and then (re-)creation" (Hutcheon 8) during which an adapter appropriates the primary source and shapes it to match his or her agenda, whether political or artistic. Additionally, an adaptation is a process of reception on the part of the audience: "We experience adaptations (*as adaptations*) as palimpsests<sup>70</sup> through our memory of other works that resonate through repetition through variation" (Hutcheon 8), for example an adaptation might resonate differently whether we are aware of what hovers around the adaptation unfolding before our eyes or not. Thus, as in the definition of the dictionary quoted by Linda Hutcheon, an adaptation is defined as "to adapt", that is, "to adjust, to alter, to make suitable" (Hutcheon 7).

Even though the previously given definition is a large one, some processes still do not

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<sup>69</sup> Hutcheon, Linda, *A Theory of Adaptation*, Taylor and Francis Group, Online, 2006.

<sup>70</sup> In her 2022 class, Miranda Corcoran evoked Gérard Genette's useful vocabulary for talking about adaptation in his 1982 book *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*. *Palimpsests*: explore how literary texts relate to each other, comment on each other, or comment on themselves; *Transtextuality*: "all that sets the text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts." (Genette 1). He defined five types of transtextuality, one was the focus of our class called *Hypertextuality*: "By hypertextuality I mean any relationship uniting a text B (which I shall call the *hypertext*) to an earlier text A (I shall, of course, call it the *hypotext*), upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary." (Genette 5). Genette would call all adaptation texts in the "second degree". They are created and received in relation to a prior text. Corcoran believed it useful to think about adaptations (hypertexts) and their sources (hypotexts) (Corcoran).

qualify as adaptations. Indeed, Linda Hutcheon maintains that “allusions to and brief echoes of other works would not qualify as extended engagements” (Hutcheon 9). Therefore, it is not enough to solely allude to a work of art; it has to be a work of art in itself resting on a primary source. Also, as plagiarism consists of not announcing the work of art to be an adaptation therefore sequels and prequels which, in Hutcheon’s opinion, are a continuation or an expansion, cannot be considered adaptations, as it does not encompass the “desire[d] repetition” (Hutcheon 9). However, it leaves room for debate, as other critics argue that as a prequel or a sequel is based on a predefined universe then they should be encompassed within the concept of adaptation.

In *A Theory of Adaptation*, Linda Hutcheon alludes to the “many different possible intentions behind the act of adaptation” (Hutcheon 7), such as the financial and commercial incentives, as well as the political motivations, or reclamations. An adaptation can also be the means through which marginalised identities can have space, such as people of colour, women, the LGBTQIA+ individuals. Or else, it can be for the pleasure of repetition of a beloved hypotext.

Adaptation is repetition, but repetition without replication. And there are manifestly many different possible intentions behind the act of adaptation: the urge to consume and erase the memory of the adapted text or to call it into question is as likely as the desire to pay tribute by copying. Adaptations such as film remakes can even be seen as mixed in intent: “contested homage” (Greenberg 1998: 115), Oedipally envious and worshipful at the same time (Horton and McDougal 1998b: 8) (Hutcheon 7)

To fulfil such aims, different forms of adaptation are available to the adapters. Geoffrey Wagner delineated it to transposition as part and parcel of the concept of adaptation, as it allows the transformation from one genre or form to another one. It is not limited to it; it can also be embodied in the change of time period, geographical location. There is also the commentary, which, as suggested by its appellation, is a comment on the politics or cultural mores of the source text, its context and social milieu. Indeed, adapting an older text could also be a way of commenting on contemporary issues; it can be done through shift in perspective. Also, the analogue works when we do not need to be familiar with the source to enjoy the adaptation, to exemplify the concept of analogy Miranda Corcoran<sup>71</sup> mentioned the adaptation of Jane Austen’s 1815 *Emma* into the 1995 film *Clueless*, also mentioned by

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<sup>71</sup> Corcoran, Miranda, Ken, Rooney, Michael, Booth, Alan, Gibbs, *Adaptation, Literature and Culture*, Ireland, University College of Cork, 2022.

Laurent Mellet (Mellet 20).<sup>72</sup>

Charlotte Brontë, aware of the myriad of possible interpretations and adaptations available, feared a too restrictive and almost caricatural adaptation of her protagonist Jane as well as her lover Rochester. Contemporary to an adaptation of *Jane Eyre* into a play staged in London, Charlotte Brontë's instant reaction was to fear a reductive adaptation. In a letter to S.W. Williams dated February 5th, 1848, she expressed her concerns.

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

‘February 5th, 1848.

Dear Sir, —A representation of *Jane Eyre* at a minor theatre would no doubt be a rather afflicting spectacle to the author of that work. I suppose all would be woefully exaggerated and painfully vulgarised by the actors and actresses on such a stage. What, I cannot help asking myself, what would they make of Mr. Rochester? And the picture my fancy conjures up by way of reply is a somewhat humiliating one. What would they make of *Jane Eyre*? I see something very pert and very affected as an answer to that query.

[...]

CURRER BELL.  
(Shorter 163)<sup>73</sup>

Thus, what I would refer to as “*JaneEyremania*” in the world of adaptation has been visible since the early stages of the novel and has never ceased, as attested by Charlotte Brontë herself in the aforementioned 1848 letter. This is also acknowledged by Miller: “Within a year it had already been adapted – without the author’s consent – for the stage, in a popular Grand Guignol format.” (Miller 1). More recently, Moyano-Rejano’s statement reports on the evolution of *Jane Eyre*’s adaptation through time: “each historical context has its own version of *Jane Eyre*” (Moyano-Rejano 1).<sup>74</sup> This reflects the extraordinary enthusiasm which followed the publication of *Jane Eyre* in 1847.

### 2.1.3. The Context of Film Adaptations

As endorsed by the joint work of Laurent Mellet and Shannon Wells-Lassagne in *Étudier l’adaptation filmique, cinéma anglais - cinéma américain*, film adaptations “are more accessible to middle and high school students than literary texts [...] In this context, knowing how to analyse an adaptation [hypertext] and relate it to its source text [hypotext] becomes an

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<sup>72</sup> Mellet, Laurent, and Shannon Wells-Lassagne, *Étudier l’adaptation filmique, cinéma anglais - cinéma américain*, Rennes, Presse Universitaire de Rennes, 2010.

<sup>73</sup> Shorter, Clement King, *Charlotte Brontë and Her Circle*, eBook, 2006.

<sup>74</sup> Moyano-Rejano, Rocio, *The Evolution of Empowerment in Different Film Adaptations of Jane Eyre*, Málaga, Málaga University, July 1, 2020.

essential tool for all those who intend to teach” (Mellet 10).<sup>75</sup> This statement influenced my decision to focus on film adaptations rather than the study of play, opera or even ballet adaptations.

According to both L. Mellet and S. Wells-Lassagne, there is no hierarchy between the hypotext and the hypertext; both are equally valuable works to be studied, which present limits induced by their nature and the choice of the author and adapter. The aim is to acknowledge the limits and possibilities offered by both media. For example, the transposition from one medium to the other allows the “audio-visual medium of cinema to fill in certain gaps that text must leave open, such as the image and voice of the characters” (Mellet 10).<sup>76</sup> On the contrary, it is the reader’s duty to fill these gaps with his or her imagination, according to Wolfgang Iser (Mellet 10).

As mentioned above, adapting a literary work is not the prerogative of film adaptations, and the arts have always drawn on the texts available. Even so, cinema has relied on the already solid audience for novels to take its lead and position itself as a legitimate seventh art (Mellet 12). Only in 1954 under the pen of François Truffaut, did the cinema truly break free from the prerogative of being faithful to the hypotext for Truffaut vouched for directors to become “authors” of their films consequently “fidelity to the text becomes less important than the very process of transposing the written word to the screen” (Mellet 14).<sup>77</sup> As aforementioned, Geoffrey Wagner defined the ways in which a literary text could be adapted into cinema yet others also theorised it. For example, McFarlane delineated it between what can be transferable such as the plot and the characters and what needs to be adapted such as the style, the enunciation to which cinema can remedy with voice-over for example (Mellet 20). Others coined their own terms such as Dudley Andrew yet even though other words are used, the ideas overlap. The most thorough description of adaptation from a literary source to a film is the one by T. Leith, what is alluring is that he offers a different point of view from Linda Hutcheon for among the list of possible forms of adaptations he includes the category “secondary”, it is a term that refers to sequels that follow on from one another and that hardly ever refer to the hypotext but only to the film sequels, a concept that did not fit into the definition of possible forms of adaptation according to Linda Hutcheon, in

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<sup>75</sup> *Plus accessible aux élèves en collège et lycée que ne sont les textes littéraires [...] Dans ce contexte, savoir analyser une adaptation et la mettre en relation avec son texte-source devient ainsi un outil essentiel pour tous ceux qui se destinent à l’enseignement.*

<sup>76</sup> *Medium audio-visuel du cinéma comble certaines failles que le texte doit laisser entières telles l’image et la voix des personnages.*

<sup>77</sup> *La fidélité au texte devient moins importante que le processus même de la transposition de l’écrit à l’écran.*

the same way he also includes “allusions” to other novels which, once more, Linda Hutcheon chooses not to include in her list of different forms of adaptation.

The multiplicity of theorists allows us above all to realise that the advent of cinema as a seventh art is recent, yet never ceases to evolve beyond the preconceived and tenacious ideas listed by Leitch.<sup>78</sup>

Therefore, in order to understand the continuous appeal to adapt Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* I chose two film adaptations from different eras which allows us to launch into a richer analysis of those adaptations in relation to the novel<sup>79</sup>, but also to each other. The first adaptation is the 1943 version of *Jane Eyre* by Robert Stevenson. It was released during the golden age of film adaptations in the 30s and 40s and is considered to be “[t]he first relevant film adaptation of *Jane Eyre* [...] its main characters were Orson Welles and Joan Fontaine – two actors who were considered as Hollywood stars” (Manso 329).<sup>80</sup> Yet it also appeared right after a new form of censorship brought about by World War II. Indeed, the Hays Code enforced by the MPPDA (the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America) imposed a set of industry guidelines (Mellet 13). Those guidelines were set to ensure the films released during the Hays Code period would adhere to a certain moral standard which was conservative on topics such as crime, sex or even religion. Films which proposed a breach to the Hays Code between 1934 and 1968 were not delivered the Production Code Seal of Approval to be released. Therefore, we can expect from Stevenson’s adaptation to exhibit elements that aligned with the mores prevalent during World War II.

The second adaptation is a more recent one directed by Cary Joji Fukunaga in the 2011 *Jane Eyre*. It was thus released long after the constraints of the MPPDA. The end of the said code introduced a new era in the film production and therefore we can expect from Fukunaga’s adaptation more liberty from the director who surely positioned himself as the “author” of his film to use Truffaut’s own words.

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<sup>78</sup> *There is such a thing as contemporary adaptation theory/differences between literary and cinematic texts are rooted in essential properties of their respective media/literary texts are verbal, films visual/novels are better than films/novels deal in concepts, films in percepts/novels create more complex characters than movies because they offer more immediate and complete access to characters’ psychological states/ cinema’s visual specification usurps its audience’s imagination/fidelity is the most appropriate criterion in analysing adaptation / source texts are more original than adaptations/adaptations are adapting exactly one text apiece/adaptations are intertexts, their precursor texts simply texts/adaptation study is a marginal enterprise (Mellet 24-25).*

<sup>79</sup> see Part I. *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë.

<sup>80</sup> Manso, Valeriano, *et al.*, “The Evolution of *Jane Eyre* in “Film Adaptation: From Classic Female Stereotype to Independent Woman”, *ResearchGate*.



## 2.3. COMPARATIVE STUDY: C.J. FUKUNAGA AND R. STEVENSON

### 2.3.1. The Transposition of the Romance Plot

Because the analysis of two film adaptations would be too broad a task and in order to have a better cohesion with the first part of my master dissertation, I chose to look at those adaptations through the lens provided by Penny Boumelha starting with the Romance Plot.

As a reminder, according to Penny Boumelha, the Romance plot unfolds with a woman, typically an outcast or isolated woman, being courted antagonistically by a man. Subsequently, complications, often referred to as intrigues, arise, leading to their resolution, ultimately culminating in the sealing of their love through marriage or, at the very least, the prospect of it.<sup>81</sup>

#### 2.2.1.1. R. Stevenson's Adaptation of the Romance Plot

Robert Stevenson's adaptation of the novel, starring Joan Fontaine and Orson Welles, premiered in 1943. In retrospect, Robert Stevenson can be considered as a pioneer, especially in the film industry, as every decision, down to the very choice of the "physical appearance of these actors [was under Hollywood's scrutiny and *in fine* the entire world's gaze. This aura] determined the image that the original characters would have in subsequent adaptations: Jane with a look of innocence and a sincere gaze, and Rochester with a strong appearance and a ruthless countenance" (Manso 330).

This choice of actors' physiques was far from innocent; it played a crucial role in allowing Robert Stevenson to enhance the plot of his choice, the Romance plot. Indeed, the 1943 adaptation flaunts characteristics of the Romance plot, and shapes how later adaptations would portray characters like Jane and Rochester, and influence their audience to view *Jane Eyre* through that lens.

Yet, the over-romanticization of *Jane Eyre*'s every aspect induced some fairly obvious biases in the 1943 adaptation. Stevenson based his adaptation on the common characteristics of the Romance plot, as analysed in the first part of my master dissertation. Yet, to better serve his choice of portraying *Jane Eyre* mainly as a Romance plot, Stevenson put the emphasis on problematic aspects of *Jane Eyre* in terms of women's intellectual emancipation. He continually reinforced the idea of the fallen woman, rooted in the concept of the angel in

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<sup>81</sup> See part I.2.2.1. Definition of the Romance Plot.

the house. The image of the angel in the house was part and parcel of the Victorian mores. It consisted in propelling the model of what the well offs of that time considered to be the perfect housewife dedicated to serving her family and husband.<sup>82</sup> This concept of the Angel in the house which was theorised in Coventry Patmore's poem is to be contrasted with the concept of the Fallen woman which stands as the very opposite of the Angel in the house. As aforementioned, Jane Eyre reinforces the concept of the fallen woman because out of fear of becoming destitute and even though she loves Rochester she does not give herself to him because they are not and cannot be married.

In his adaptation, Robert Stevenson also chose to emphasise the male gaze, once again a problematic concept in terms of women's physical emancipation. In the 1943 adaptation, Jane Eyre is shaped by the male gaze. The main protagonist is portrayed as an object of fantasy through Rochester's eyes and, by extension, through the eyes of the men of that era. In contrast, in the original book, she is presented as thin, pale, without real beauty and far too spirited to appeal to typical Victorian suitors. Therefore, it seems that R. Stevenson advocates for an adaptation made by men for men in which Jane Eyre embodies the societal expectation of women staying at home. Towards the end of the war, the director may have seen an opportunity through the novel, leveraging its established readership, to redirect women who had occupied so-called "masculine" roles during the war to more traditionally feminine or to view their current position only as temporary.

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<sup>82</sup> see 1.1.5 Women's Place in Literature.



Figure 1 Film Poster. “Jane Eyre by Charlotte Brontë”, directed by Robert Stevenson, 1943.

The strong emphasis on the Romance Plot and the resulting predominance of the male gender have been very much conspicuous since the promotional phase of the 1943 film adaptation. The film poster itself serves as a clear indication of the dominant plot, as outlined in Moyano-Rejano’s research paper.

It is worth emphasizing that this film and its publicity material put their emphasis on the romantic elements of the novel whereas it paid less attention to Jane’s developing sense of self. It was presented in theatres with headings such as “A love story every woman would die a thousand deaths to live” or “Their lips were the ecstasy of first love, their hearts knew the terror of frustration, their arms knew the thrill of triumph” (Griggs 34). These promotional images of the main characters showed a large discrepancy between the advertisements for the movie and the description offered in the novel” (Moyano-Rejano 13).

In this promotional poster and the entire adaptation, Jane Eyre’s character is reduced to a woman a man fell in love with, she appears defenceless and fragile, essentially passive, in the arms of a robust Rochester, who holds her as he would any other damsel in distress. The male gaze is evident throughout the film poster, notably, in the position of saviour given to Orson Welles whose name appears first, as if he were the main protagonist when in fact, he only appears in the second half of the novel. Thus this prominence given to the film-

Rochester both in the poster and the film itself, thanks to camera angles that put him forwards, allows the viewer to adopt Rochester's gaze and desire the film-Jane, or rather, the Hollywood actress Joan Fontain. This lust for the film-Jane is channelled through intrusive close-ups that violate the character's intimacy and thoughts while highlighting Joan Fontain's conspicuous beauty. The film-Jane's physique thus appears moulded to suit Rochester and, by extension, a male audience. This impression of Jane's modelled physique is reinforced at the very end when the blind Rochester places his hands on Jane's face to recognize her, but the freeze frame gives this shot a whole new interpretation.

Classical Hollywood starlets were coded for strong visual and erotic impact for men's pleasure. Films propagated images of femininity, nurturance and the family, thus reminding viewers of women's natural roles of wives and daughters. Fontaine's portrayal of Jane is cloaked in this corrective ideal of wartime femininity, a depiction that manifestly revokes the valiant feminism that has famously become associated with Brontë's Jane. (Fanning in Moyano-Rejano 14)



*Figure 2 Jane's Face Possessed by Rochester's Hands (Stevenson 01:34:59)*

The director harboured no desire to alter or tamper with Joan Fontaine's good looks. Instead, her grace is prominently displayed. For instance, in the film poster, she wears a glamorous dress that complements her, draped around her shoulders but disclosing her neckline in a sensual manner. Her hair, a symbol of women's beauty, flows freely, and her made-up face and red lips add a touch of sophistication quite at odds with the novel character, and allow R. Stevenson to cast Jane in a Hollywoodian light as a desirable woman.

The evident use of the characters' physiques as well as camera shots set the stage for a new concept to take place, that of the Fallen woman. Indeed, the aforementioned arguments and headings seem to depict a tumultuous love story in which Jane's integrity as a respected Victorian woman is about to be put to the test. As previously explored in the Romance plot section (of my master dissertation), their love story is fraught with hurdles. The love triangle

involving Jane, Rochester, and Blanche Ingram, along with the discovery of Rochester's wife, Bertha Mason or Antoinette, constitutes some of the obstacles the two lovers must face.



Figure 3 Visual Representation presentation of the Love Triangle (Stevenson 01:09:00)

The love triangle is adeptly transposed to the screen, visually represented as a triangle emphasised by the pool table's corner as well as the exchanged of glances between Rochester and Jane while Miss Ingram belittles Jane, positioning her as inferior due to her status as a governess: "Does *that* person want you?" (Stevenson 01:09:00). In his adaptation, R. Stevenson holds the viewer as a witness to the growing affection between Rochester and Jane. Their attraction and subsequent love become evident, especially through gestures of affection uncommon in a master-governess relationship. Since their initial encounter, Rochester has sparked Jane Eyre's curiosity, manifesting in her inability to divert her gaze, even when Adèle demands her attention back with "Mademoiselle, mademoiselle!" (Stevenson 00:38:32). Previously to that scene, the camera alternates between Rochester facing the elements outside with loud music and Jane Eyre performing her expected duties in silence. These cuts allude to the division between the private sphere, reserved to women, and the public sphere, typically reserved to men at that time. Despite their separation in status, gender, and even physical location by a door, the viewer senses a growing tension between them. The camera prominently follows Rochester in the house, stopping and moving in tandem with him, just as it does for Jane Eyre. Indeed, she responds to his movements, even sitting when he requests, all the while keeping her eyes on him. She is portrayed as a patient and infatuated woman awaiting orders. Thus, Stevenson's camera does not present them as equal. Additionally, she is often captured from a high-angle view, accentuating her different and inferior status, while Rochester is oftentimes shot from a low angle, highlighting his stature and character. The

camera movements, along with Jane's behaviour, assert Rochester's position as the master of the house.



Figure 4 Rochester and Jane: Incandescent Glances (Stevenson 00:38:30)

The Romance plot thus acts as a way of nourishing the male gaze while simultaneously robbing Jane of an active role.

'[Rochester] gains more prominence on the screen, which results in an eroticization of the character. It is exaggerated Welles's physical masculinity to lure female spectators'. Ellis and Kaplan reflect upon the significance of the male gaze in Stevenson's *Jane Eyre*, 'it constantly subordinates the character of Jane, so she is denied from the power of this gaze. Jane's gaze is fixed on Rochester as an object of desire and does not give her any more power' (Fanning in Moyano-Rejano 17).

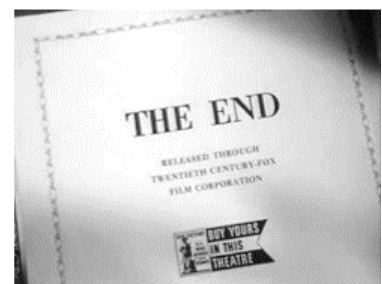
Moreover, when Jane Eyre seeks a reference to secure a new job elsewhere due to Rochester's impending marriage and Adèle's move to a new school, the emphasis is not on her emancipation and freedom through work. Instead, the focus shifts to the tension between her and Rochester, particularly when he requests more than a simple farewell. He shakes hands with her, drawing her closer in a gesture closer to a caress than a conventional handshake. "That all seemed stinged in my notion, dry and unfriendly, won't you do more than just say goodbye?" (Stevenson 01:10:39).



*Figure 5 Smitten Rochester and Jane (Stevenson 01:10:39)*

Stevenson did not shy away either from depicting a dilemma faced by women at the time. The message advising women to prioritise love over labour and consequently return to their homes, symbolising the epitome of the private sphere, is evident in the manufactured character of Dr. Rivers. Indeed, the latter insists on the importance of labour over love for Jane and women in general. However, his pressure on Jane to choose labour only results in pushing her further away from him. Jane's clear shift from labour in favour of her private and love life must have chimed with women's aspirations during the Second World War, as visualised in the 1943 adaptation.

Rivers asserts Jane's necessity of returning to work, though he omits his petition to marry him. In this case, Jane is bound to choose between marriage and labour, between labour and the home. This illustrates a conflict often faced by women and represented in the media during the Second World War (Brosh in Moyano-Rejano 21)



*Figure 6 Final Romantic Scene (Stevenson 01:10:39)*

This decision to return to Rochester instead of pursuing a more religious destiny alongside Dr. Rivers is encapsulated in the final scene, when the two lovers share a languorous kiss. However, as Jane's case illustrates, going back to her lover comes with certain expectations, whether it be "motherhood, marriage [or] domesticity".

Jane's interaction with Mrs. Fairfax is shortened. She only makes Jane aware of the fire and Bertha's death, but she omits the details concerning Rochester. Regarding her meeting with Rochester, as in the novel, he initially scorns Jane's offer and urges her to leave him. Despite the brief dialogue among them, their kiss asserts Jane's complete union with Rochester. Jane's voice-over recounts the later events as well as her later maternity. Therefore, it emphasizes the importance of motherhood, marriage and domesticity. The final image is a final shot of both characters in the distance and the closing of the book, which acts as a reminder to the audience that this film is based on a literary work. (Moyano-Rejano 23)

R. Stevenson's ending, "old-fashioned though it may seem" (Williams 337)<sup>83</sup> aligns with his agenda. "With their backs turned to us, silhouetted against the sky, the voice-over quietly ends: 'and then one day... he could see that the boy had inherited his eyes as they once were - large, brilliant, and black'" (Williams 337). The film concludes with a fairy tale-like voice-over, which recounts the latest happy news and suggests how young women should navigate their lives, and pressures them into choosing a domestic position as the only available and desirable one. In this regard, Jane embraces the role of the Angel in the house, an ideal compelling every young woman aspiring to happiness to emulate the film-Jane's attitude or rather servitude. Numerous critics express regret over the omission of Jane's financial independence, which will be discussed in the following section on the adaptation of the novel's Bildungsroman plot. They argue that Stevenson's choice only alters Charlotte Brontë's initial feminist stance, lamenting his decision to "reduce [*Jane Eyre*] to the romantic dimension of the book" (Moyano-Rejano 22). R. Stevenson clearly strayed away from a realistic vision of the novel and of Jane, transforming her instead into a Hollywood movie-star.

#### 2.2.1.2. C.J. Fukunaga's Adaptation of the Romance Plot

Cary Joji Fukunaga's 2011 adaptation of the novel, starring Mia Wasikowska and Michael Fassbender, premiered and stands as the most recent filmic rendition of *Jane Eyre* to date. Similarly to his peer, Robert Stevenson's production, Fukunaga's 2011 Anglo-American movie was ground-breaking in the cinematic world. Indeed, the adaptation is considered noteworthy for showing "the life of Jane by playing with the past and present of the main character." (Solves in Manso 329). C. J. Fukunaga succeeded in leaving a distinct mark on the adaptation of *Jane Eyre*, becoming a pioneer who forever changed the way any future director or audience would approach a work of art such as C. Brontë's.

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<sup>83</sup> Williams, Carolyn, "Jane Eyre 2011." *Victorian Literature and Culture*, vol. 40, no. 1, p. 331-37, 2012.



His indelible mark is closely associated with what Truffaut described as being the author of one's film (as discussed in section 2.1). Fukunaga attains the status of both author and director, thanks to his "remarkable aestheticism" (Manso 334), which emanates from the balance he provides through the "careful audiovisual treatment [that] receives as much prominence as the story itself" (Manso 334).

The most noticeable feature of the 2011 adaptation stems from the recollection of the events through a circular structure, perfectly capturing the complexity of C. Brontë's novel as well as the character's story. However, as stated in the first part, a linear structure is more common in Romance plots, typically following a codified structure, such as the character's encounter leading to a "clear beginning, climax and conclusion" (Moyano-Rejano 47), usually marriage or at least the prospect of it. Although the structure is rather uncommon and innovative, it does not make Fukunaga's adaptation inferior; instead, "this version pays less attention to the romantic dimension of the story in favour of the introduction of Jane's feisty personality in several sequences" (Moyano-Rejano 9). Therefore, Fukunaga's intentions differ from R. Stevenson's adaptation, and his use of different filmic techniques "attempt to provide a different view of the text" (Moyano-Rejano 47) to an audience already familiar with the source material.

Moyano-Rejano interprets Fukunaga's innovative techniques as a response to a desire to "address the timeless love story [...] follow[ing] the feminist ideals of the independent twenty-first-century woman" (Moyano-Rejano 9). In this context, the selection of actors to interpret C. Brontë's characters is of paramount importance in reflecting Fukunaga's desire for a renewed feminist approach to better encapsulate what Charlotte Brontë stood for. Consequently, the motivations behind his choice of actors and actresses differ significantly from Robert Stevenson's process. This distinction can be attributed not only to a different political and social context but to varying motivations, evident in the faces carrying Fukunaga's adaptation.

Mia Wasikowska, cast as Jane Eyre, embodies C.J. Fukunaga's desire to portray C. Brontë's protagonist in alignment with her complex characteristics.

[Manso explains that Fukunaga's choice for her main actress is rooted in] the phenomenon of "celebrity intertextuality", in this case as a model of the nineteenth-century heroine, whose very presence is enough to evoke a cultural discourse in different period productions featuring a non-conformist female role, as is the case in *Madame Bovary* (2014) and *Crimson Peak* (2015); therefore, its introduction in the Victorian narrative may favour the acceptance of an audiovisual proposal, since the actress may appear familiar to the spectator in nineteenth-century speeches (Manso 334).

Interestingly, Wasikowska's physique only comes second in the decision to make her the lead actress. According to Manso, her "physiognomy corresponds to an unusually modern female image: she is slim, attractive, but not voluptuous, even with some androgynous features" (Manso 334), reminiscent of the "poor, obscure, plain, and little" (Brontë 213) novel-Jane. This choice deviates from the conventional representation of Jane Eyre, as portrayed by Joan Fontaine in Robert Stevenson's adaptation.

In this sense, Jane's appearance can coincide more with her original conception of the novel, in which she is described as woman not particularly attractive, than with the other audiovisual versions, in which the protagonist is a model of classic beauty, as in the case of Joan Fontaine in the version of the year 1943 (Manso 334)

The selection of Michael Fassbender as Rochester further illuminates Fukunaga's motivation. Indeed, Michael Fassbender, an attractive and acclaimed actor, disrupts the traditional representation of Mr. Rochester, generally regarded as unattractive. In Fukunaga's adaptation, it is the male actor who undergoes a significant sexualisation of his character in contrast to Joan Fontaine's representation of the novel-Jane.

In the leading male role, the German-Irish actor Michael Fassbender breaks with the usual representation of Mr. Rochester, generally regarded as unattractive. In this respect, González claims that the actor's appeal and the shots dedicated to his character convert him into a privileged object of sexual observation for both Jane and the audience, thus breaking with the Mulvey and model of gendered spectatorship known as the "male gaze" in relation to the Hollywood film narrative, which indicates that only women should be framed or objectified for the satisfaction of male audiences. Keeping this in mind, the sexualization of the male character is, in this version, superior to the one of the female character (Manso 334).

Thus, the choice of Michael Fassbender as Rochester deviates from the "unattractive" novel-Rochester and plays a fitting part in C.J. Fukunaga's reworking of the English literary classic.



*Figure 7 Sexualised and Objectified Rochester (Fukunaga 01:14:11 - 01:14:18)*

The promotional material for the film significantly differs from what Robert Stevenson presented.



Figure 8 Film Poster. “Jane Eyre”, directed by Cary Joji Fukunaga, 2011

Indeed, the artistic direction takes on a more streamlined approach. Both Jane Eyre and Rochester are featured on the poster, yet, this time, Mia Wasikowska is granted greater prominence than her co-star Michael Fassbender for she appears first in the credits and occupies almost the entire film poster, with her body turned sideways occupying the majority of the visual space. Michael Fassbender, on the other hand, appears second on the actors list and is only visible through to the layering of the left half of his face on Jane Eyre’s conventional Victorian dress. The fact that they look in the opposite directions hints at potential challenges in their future relationship. Unlike Robert Stevenson’s film poster studied above, this poster fails to portray the concept of the male gaze in keeping with Fukunaga’s new vision for the twenty-first-century adaptation. Neither Mia Wasikowska’s features, nor her body are unduly embellished or sexualised, her hair is tied back and her gaze is directed downwards, presenting Jane Eyre as poised and self-confident but still shaped by the conventions and mores of her time. As Mrs. Reviron-Piégay suggested when we discussed the film-poster, Rochester’s face appearing as if by transparency through her dress, may also imply that he can see through her and control her whole body, when you look at Jane, you see Rochester’s face, they fade into each other, perhaps emphasizing the fact that their fates are

indissolubly linked. Perhaps the film poster may represent a possible allusion to the fact that Jane remains clear-headed in spite of her bodily response to Rochester; her head can be seen above that of Rochester, firm and resolute in its expression, while her body seems to be suffused by Rochester's presence: a possible hint at the dilemma Jane will have to overcome, that of soul versus body. This is emphasized by the contrast between the top of the poster (Jane's head in colour) and the bottom part (her body and Rochester's face in black and white) an insistence on Jane's thoughts, more vivid than her body.

For a 2011 viewer, the message is clear, the film portends the synopsis of a complex love story rooted in another time, as hinted by the dusty pink colour, unfolding against an intricate psychological backdrop. This film poster does not deceive its viewer into believing Rochester is the focal character, instead it positions Jane Eyre at the forefront, offering an open window into her life and psyche. Indeed, Jane Eyre is flaunted as a woman ahead of her time, looking ahead on the right side of the film-poster, commonly associated with the future, while the man she loves is tormented by his past, visible in his gaze to the left side, commonly associated with the past.

The film poster successfully translates the characteristics of the Romance plot to the screen, using subterfuges to stand out from past adaptations. Indeed, he resorts to rather static camera shots combined with Mia Wasikowska's piercing, almost defiant gaze to suggest Jane Eyre's reserved character and her particular posture at Thornfield Hall. However, her reserved nature explodes in the climax scene, giving the romantic genre its due recognition.

Before reaching the climax, Fukunaga resorts to equally capital extracts from the novel and transposes them to the screen to underscore the growing infatuation between the two characters. For instance, through blurred cuts and flashbacks, the audience glimpses the night when a fire breaks out in Mr. Rochester's bedroom, extinguished thanks to Rochester and Jane's joint efforts. At this moment, as one fire is extinguished, another seems to kindle before our eyes. This budding flame of attraction is symbolised by the recurring candle in every shot they share together, reminiscent of the novel, and Jane's voyeuristic glances at her master Rochester's body, which does not seem to displease him, even though he is but very lightly covered by his nightclothes.



*Figure 9 Jane Sneaking Up on Rochester getting Dressed (Fukunaga 00:49:10)*

It becomes evident that Fukunaga has embraced the metaphors of flames and incandescent love between Rochester and Jane throughout. Candles are a recurring motif, and on this particular night, their relationship took a significant step forward, evolving into genuine passion symbolised by the flames in Rochester's bedroom.



*Figure 10 Jane and Rochester's Incandescent Love (Fukunaga 00:47:00)*

However, the flames are not the sole indication of Jane and Rochester's burgeoning feelings, the camera also implies a distinct intimacy through progressively closer shots. The lens zooms in on their hands in a close-up, and as both are clad in white this hints at their impending marriage. Additionally, a medium close-up shot captures their faces in such proximity that they breathe the same air and nearly kiss, although they refrain, despite Rochester's encouragement.

(She takes off his coat.) ROCHESTER Is that how you would leave me? Rochester is between Jane and the door. ROCHESTER Jane, fire is a horrible death. You have saved my life. Don't walk past me as if we were strangers. JANE What am I to do then? ROCHESTER At least... take my hand. Rochester holds out his hand. Jane takes it. Rochester wraps her hand in both of his. ROCHESTER I have a pleasure in owing you my life. JANE There is no debt. Rochester is looking at her small hand. She tries to inch it back. He doesn't let her. She looks up at him. ROCHESTER I knew you would do me good in some way. I saw it in your eyes when I first beheld you. Their expression did not strike my very inmost being so, for nothing. People talk of natural sympathies... You. Rochester is drawing her slowly closer. Jane, disconcerted, is trying to resist.

JANE Good night then, sir. ROCHESTER So you will leave me? Jane doesn't move. Her breath is heightened. It vapourises. JANE I am cold. ROCHESTER Go. At last, he relaxes his grip. She passes him. She goes. (Fukunaga 00:58:38 - 00:51:57)



Figure 11 Growing Chemistry and Break from a Master-Governess Relationship  
(Fukunaga 00:50:38 - 00:51:57)

However, their relationship soon encounters obstacles, mirroring the novel as discussed in part one. Indeed, Jane becomes unintentionally entangled in a love triangle with Miss Blanche Ingram. The love triangle imagery was unmistakable in Robert Stevenson's version, thanks to the use of the pool table. In Fukunaga's adaptation, the focus is clear. Indeed, at times, the camera captures everyone but Jane, showcasing the guest and, especially the complicity uniting Blanche Ingram and Rochester as they play the piano. However, the shallow focus shot then shifts to Jane Eyre, emphasising her peculiar position as a governess amongst the visitors.<sup>84</sup> Forced to attend this rude spectacle, Jane appears uncomfortable and ill at ease to the point of taking her leave.



Figure 12 Jane's Discomfort conveyed thanks to a change from a deep focus to a shallow focus  
(Fukunaga 00:59:00)

Fukunaga chooses to omit the scene when Rochester dresses as a fortune teller which does not compromise Rochester's characterization. Indeed, when a visitor named Richard Mason is announced, the camera once again uses shallow focus on Rochester, guiding our

<sup>84</sup> see 1.1.6. The Governess' Place in the Victorian Society.



attention to his emotions. Rochester loses all composure, we witness his facial features tense up, and his eyes fixate on Jane. It is evident that something is amiss; Rochester himself describes the situation as a “blow” to Jane (Fukunaga<sup>85</sup> 01:00:37). This scene portrays Rochester as deceitful and deceptive, much like the omitted gypsy scene would have done.



*Figure 13 Rochester’s Characterisation (Fukunaga 01:00:37)*

Due to the myriad of obstacles they have already faced, when Rochester proposes to Jane, she fears that his marriage proposal is just another of his tricks. She lashes out at Rochester, unveiling her inner passion for her master, letting us in on what we had previously only assumed. She reveals her deepest feelings for Rochester, almost verbatim echoing the novel’s Jane Eyre, paying a nice tribute to C. Brontë.



*Figure 14 The Pastoral Proposal Scene (Fukunaga 01:16:33)*

Hence, the proposal scene stands as a pivotal moment in the film, for the transposition of the novel’s Romantic plot. Indeed, C.J. Fukunaga chooses to alter some aspects of this crucial scene to effectively convey Jane and Rochester’s deepening affection to the audience.

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<sup>85</sup> Fukunaga, Cary Joji, *Jane Eyre*, 2011.

The setting, first and foremost, no longer unfolds against an evening sky, instead, it takes place during the golden hour in a lush natural environment. The two central figures meet on a bridge set against a backdrop of trees, with the sound of the chirping of birds and the rush of water creating an immersive ambiance. The exchange of words is kept minimal, relying on subtle facial expressions, tears, and actions to convey Jane's emotional turmoil and Rochester's distress and incomprehension. Although the director modifies the dialogues, Rochester's lines remain fairly faithful to the novel. However, as Jonas notes, "the removal of references to marriage as a financial arrangement, emphasi[se] the romantic aspect of their relationship" (Jonas).<sup>86</sup>

[Then let] your will... decide your destiny... I offer my hand, my heart, [*sic.* and a share of all my possessions...] I ask you to pass through life at my side – [*sic.* to be my second self, and best earthly companion] (Jonas).

Am I a machine without feelings? Do you think that because I am poor, obscure, plain and little that I am soulless and heartless. I have as much soul as you and full as much heart and if god had blessed me with beauty and wealth I could make it as hard for you to leave me as it is for I to leave you (Fukunaga 01:18:21)



*Figure 15 Jane's Emotional Assertion of their Equal positions (Fukunaga 01:18:24)*

The alteration in the dialogues not only injects more rhythm but also successfully brings Jane to the forefront. According to Jonas, "what's left, it seems, is Romanticism; yes, with a capital 'R.' While Buffini also does away with some of the language in Jane's most well-known lines, she also keeps some of the most crucial language" (Jonas) in order to provide the necessary space needed to express her message to Rochester, and, equally important, to the world, a space Wasikowska's character has sorely lacked in the past.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Jonas, Chloe, "Jane Eyre: A Proposal", *Victorian Visual Culture*, English 325, Mount Holyoke College, December 14, 2020.

<sup>87</sup> Altered quotation provided by Jonas: 'Do you think I can stay... **[And] become nothing to you?** Do you think I **am** an automaton?— **[I] a machine without feelings?** and can bear to have my morsel of bread snatched from my lips, and my drop of living water dashed from my cup? **Do you think, because I am poor, obscure,**



Various techniques, including alterations in setting, dialogues and camera shots, were frequently employed to capture the characteristics of the Romance Plots present in the 1847 novel. However, the Romance plot appeared too ominous at times as stated by Mrenmoi. Indeed, she laments that “Cary Fukunaga has turned the feminist text into a romantic movie” leading astray the characterisation of a “strong Jane Eyre” (Mrenmoi 133).<sup>88</sup> Mrenmoi feels that the core essence of *Jane Eyre* was overlooked for visual pleasure.

The movie in the process of giving visual pleasure to its audience moved away from Jane’s struggles of belonging to the Victorian era. The novel *Jane Eyre*, being a 19th-century novel outshines the movie and series adaptations. Hence, the paper can be used to find the loopholes in the adaptations of *Jane Eyre*.” (Mrenmoi 133)

Despite a lack of consensus on the matter, C.J. Fukunaga asserts that deviating and going against a feminist interpretation of *Jane Eyre* was not part of his intention when creating the adaptation, yet Mrenmoi does expose some solid argumentation, but we shall come back to it in the following Bildungsroman subpart.

Even though their love literally flourishes, the biggest hurdle is yet to come in the form of “Bertha Antoinette Mason”, as termed by Rochester, which is an improvement, for in Fukunaga’s adaptation, he acknowledges the problematic baptisms of Antoinette into Bertha. Nevertheless, Bertha is still depicted as a creature and a monster, lacking much soul or history, evident in Rochester’s reference to her as: “my own demon” (Fukunaga 01:27:39). She is belittled and objectified as an obstacle standing across Jane and Rochester’s path, visible through her position in the following camera shot in which she is behind blinds, serving as metaphors of prison bars, and placed in the middle of the blurred figures of the two lovers. However, her role is kept to a minimum and her significance in Jane’s life is not mentioned.<sup>89</sup> The omission of the scene during which she tears apart Jane’s wedding veil prevents the audience from humanising Bertha and maybe from seeing her as Jane’s protective doppelganger.

Certainly no relation between Jane and Bertha is adumbrated, a relation of the sort that Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar taught us to see, in which the “madwoman in the attic” acts out Jane’s own displaced rage (Gilbert and Gubar 356-62). I especially missed the pre-wedding scene in which Bertha enters Jane’s chamber and tears the wedding veil in

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**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 as hard for you to leave me, as it is now for me to leave you. I am not [speaking]... to you now through the medium of custom, conventionalities, nor even of mortal flesh;—it is my spirit that addresses your spirit; just as if [we] both had passed through the grave, and we stood at God’s feet, equal,—as we are! / ‘As we are!’ repeated Mr. Rochester...” (257).**

<sup>88</sup> Mrenmoi, Sheikh Tasmima, “Analyzing *Jane Eyre*: Intersectionality and the 21st Century Adaptations”, *Research Gate*, January, p.-131-33, 2023.

<sup>89</sup> see 1.2. *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë.

half. In that scene of the novel, Jane looks into her mirror and sees not herself but the horrific vision of an unknown other - a clear indication of their mysterious identification (Williams 335)



*Figure 17 Flourishing Love Story (Fukunaga 01:23:07)*



*Figure 16 Bertha Antoinette Mason: The Human Obstacle (Fukunaga 01:26:13)*

As in the novel, following the discovery of Antoinette Bertha Mason, Jane escapes Thornfield Hall, yet her love for Rochester remains palpable through Fukunaga's deceptive camera shots. Even though physically distant from him, we can still sense the emotional closeness between Jane and Rochester. Jane's mind plays tricks on her, creating an illusion of Rochester banging on her door when it is St John Rivers. Fukunaga employs misleading camera shots, providing us with privileged access to Jane's mental journey.



*Figure 18 Deceiving Camera Shots (Fukunaga 01:38:47)*

Jane's physical and emotional journey reaches its culmination upon the protagonists' reunion. We shall dwell on Jane's journey in the following subpart. Contrary to what we previously explored in Robert Stevenson's adaptation, the 2011-film-version-Jane is an active component, the leading character of the two as she approaches a seated Rochester, takes hold of his hand to place it and gently up on her face. She directs his gestures, acting as the maestro, and the final words come from her through an imperative sentence: "Is it a dream? / Awaken then" (Fukunaga 01:54:15).



*Figure 19 Jane as the Maestro of their Long Overdue Reunion (Fukunaga 1:52:50)*

The 2011 adaptation fails to convey the novel's ending allotted to St John Rivers. Yet, Fukunaga delivers the sweetest of endings, through their embrace and synchronised breathing, the protagonists become one, disregarding the exterior world, and enjoying complete and peaceful equality, evident in their relaxed figures and features. Nonetheless, the perception of a film calls out to each individuals' perceptions differently, making it a highly subjective endeavour. This subjectivity may partially explain the disparity between my perception of Fukunaga's ending and Carolyn Williams' interpretation.

This film relies on a version of the tension between the spiritual and the material for its conclusion. The lovers, moved to the point of being overwhelmed by their reunion, wonder whether their joy can be real. Or is it a dream? The film ends with the definitive words "awaken then!" followed suddenly by a blank black screen, and then the credits. How different from and how much worse than both the novel's ending and the endings of various film versions that feature the blind Rochester in a sort of "mad scene" as he slowly recognizes Jane ("these fingers - these small, soft fingers!") (Williams 336)



Figure 20 Jane and Rochester's Both Peaceful and Equal Embrace (Fukunaga 1:53:30)

C. Williams also laments not finding an adaptation that succeeded, to capture the originality and beauty of *Jane Eyre's* ending which is a criticism that both applies to R. Stevenson's and C.J. Fukunaga's adaptations.

With the inevitable loss of Jane's address to her readers in any film version, we also lose the novel's last chapter, beginning with the satisfying "Reader, I married him." Many of the films of *Jane Eyre* nevertheless find a way to tell us that Jane has a child (who has inherited his father's eyes); that Rochester's sight partially returns; and what happens to the other main characters. But no film version (that I know of) has attempted to turn us to the letter from St. John Rivers that ends the novel (Williams 336).

### 2.2.2. The Transposition of the Bildungsroman's Plot

During the Victorian period women writers seized the Bildungsroman plot, originally exclusive to male journeys.<sup>90</sup> They did so to articulate a new form of selfhood for women and to convey feminist grievances through fiction. It was therefore a subtle and peaceful way of sowing the seeds for later feminist militancy aiming to secure a more prominent position in society.<sup>91</sup>

Thus, thanks to *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Brontë opens the door for other women, sociologists, journalists and readers from all walks of life to seize this subject and collectively embark on a path for spreading the knowledge as well as their desire for more gender equality. In her novel, as aforementioned in the first part of my master dissertation, C. Brontë puts her audience in a privileged position for she gives a voice to a fringe of society that was in the margin either because of their sex or status. Indeed, the readers have access to a governess, a female Victorian woman's growing maturity in the face of hardship from her young years to adulthood.

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<sup>90</sup> See 1.2.3. The Bildungsroman's Plot.

<sup>91</sup> See 1.1.8. Feminism and Revision.

### 2.2.2.1. R. Stevenson's Adaptation of the Bildungsroman's Plot

In a way that is what R. Stevenson does when following Jane's life events in a chronological fashion. At times the 1943 adaptation even lets Jane's voice over recap the main events of her life when she reads pages of what R. Stevenson makes the audience believe is the real 1847 novel even though it only serves adaptation purposes and saves the director time in order to dwell on scenes he finds more crucial to Jane's journey.

It has a classic narrative structure and tells the story of Jane chronologically. For this reason, Jane narrates the incidents since she lived with her aunt-in-law, Mrs Reed, as a child, until she decided to remain by Rochester's side after the destruction of Thornfield, even using intertitles taken from the novel (Manso 330).

Jane's hardships commence in the Reed household, inhabited by her aunt Mrs Reed as well as her cousins. R. Stevenson convincingly portrays a marginalised and sorrowful child-Jane. The frame within frame conveys a feeling of entrapment and submission experienced by the eponymous character, aligning with both the novel and Stevenson's adaptation. She is depicted as an ill-treated child, a mere puppet under the command of M. Brocklehurst, who does not hesitate to seize her by the ear to move her around as he pleases.



*Figure 21* Child-Jane a Mere Puppet (Stevenson 00:02:20)



*Figure 22 Outcasted and Belittled Jane Facing a Tough Crowd (Stevenson 00:03:04)*

The camera shots and angles contribute to the portrayal of Jane as an outcast within her own family.

The 1944 film abounds in low-angle shots conveying the girl's feeling of powerlessness in front of the authority figures like Mrs Reed and Mr Brocklehurst whose decisions are not to be questioned. The slant views generate feelings of unease and evoke a biased attitude toward the poor victimized child (Letort 130).<sup>92</sup>

Indeed, Jane is constantly looked down upon as exemplified by low-angle shots featuring her aunt, cousin, and Mr. Brocklehurst, while high-angle shots underscore her belittlement. Jane appears defenceless in front of her aunt, her cousin and Chairman Brocklehurst, not a religious in this adaptation. Thus, Jane's inferiority is emphasised by the composition of the shots for they are all united, it seems, to subdue her. The visual clash is evident, framing Jane alone against the three figures aligned in opposition to her. They loathe her and yet they are the ones in control hence Jane's aunt approves of her departure to Lowood School for girls.

Surprisingly enough, for it plays a crucial part in Jane's childhood, no scenes of violence are clearly captured at Gateshead, the audience only gets allusions, hints at Jane's bullying. In a similar vein, the infamous red room is also absent from the adaptation.

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<sup>92</sup> Letort, Delphine, "Diverging Interpretations of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), Franco Zeffirelli's and Robert Stevenson's Screen Adaptations". *LISA e-Journal. Littératures, Histoire Des Idées, Images, Sociétés Du Monde Anglophone – Literature, History of Ideas, Images and Societies of the English-Speaking World*, no. Vol. VII – n°4, Aug. p.-123–38, 2009.



However, the sense of entrapment resurfaces when Jane leaves Gateshead for Lowood School, symbolised by her passage through massive gates resembling an exit from prison. As the music develops into a high pitch and more intense one the audience is aware that a pivotal change is occurring in the narrative.



Figure 23 Jane's Departure from Gateshead: Jane's Departure from her Childhood Prison (Stevenson 00:06:16)

Even though Jane, from the opening scenes, is chiefly victimised, whether by other characters or through the camera shots and angles, once out of Gateshead her feisty temperament expresses itself as noted by Manso.

She stands out for her strength, even at moments when she feels especially vulnerable. She demonstrates this as a child when leaving her aunt's house to go to Lowood Institution, for before passing through the gate, she turns and shouts, "Goodbye, Mrs. Reed. I hated you and hate everything about you! I'll never come and see you when I'm grown up, and I'll never call you Aunt! If anyone asks me how you treated me, I'll say you are bad, hardhearted and mean. The very sight of you makes me sick!" (Manso 331).

This openly access to passion and hatred mirrors the novel-Jane, who asks her aunt to send her to Lowood school for she hates living in Gateshead: "I am not your dear; I cannot lie down. Send me to school soon, Mrs. Reed, for I hate to live here" (Brontë 33)

From then on, the audience follows Jane on a new path. To visually articulate the transition from one stage of Jane's life to another, the film director introduces several changes, such as an adjustment in light. Everything around Jane takes on a new, brighter aspect when on her way to the school. The dominance of white as well as the enthusiastic music convey a more hopeful sentiment for Jane's future (Stevenson 00:06:00). Jane also appears enthusiastic in the carriage but as the name of the school is pronounced, the man on the right-hand side takes on a preoccupied countenance, and the setting turns dark again as if

the dreams she just expressed to the coachman are about to be crushed in this new institution. The camera does a close-up on the school plaque which reads “Lowood Institution Henry Brocklehurst Esq. Chairman of the Board of Trustees” (Stevenson 00:07:18). Disturbingly, it resembles an obituary plate, which does not augur well. The tracking shots then follows Jane, who by now has fallen asleep, and is scooped up and passed from the coachman’s hands to another pair of hands, like simple goods or a piece of luggage. This reinforces the image of her as the puppet she was in Gateshead. When she passes the threshold in a man’s arms, and the door shuts behind them, it becomes clear that she has transitioned from one prison to another,<sup>93</sup> when I quote C. Bazin who states that Jane “falls from Gateshead to Lowood” (Bazin 14). The voiceover further clarifies the situation, as Jane states as if reminiscing in first-person narrator style from *Jane Eyre*.

I was awakened in the morning to find my dreams of Lowood shattered. In their place was to stand a school that was more like a prison, dominated by the cold, implacable cruelty of Mr. Brocklehurst (Stevenson 00:07:49)

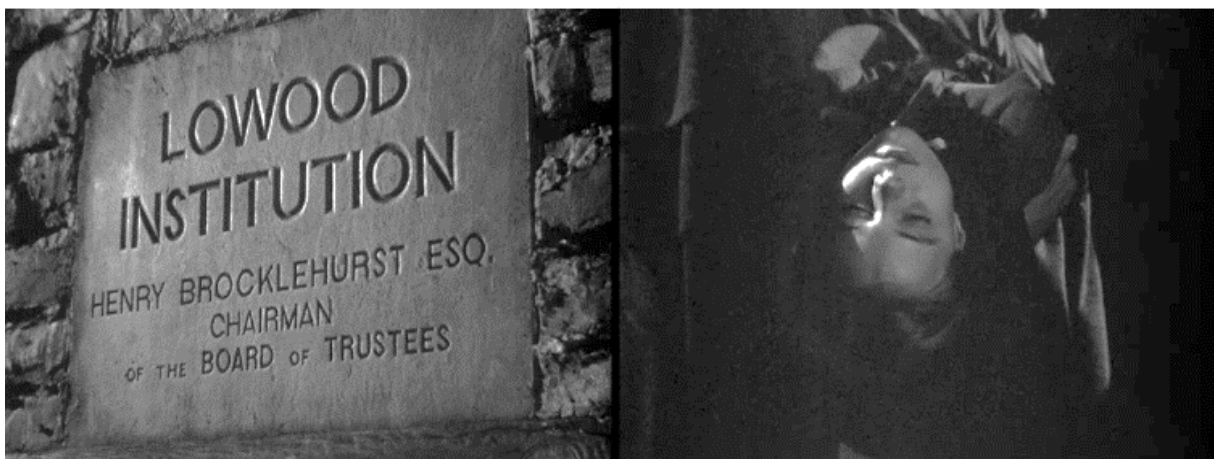


Figure 24 Lowood: Jane’s New Prison (Stevenson 00:07:57)

The term “prison” is indeed fitting to describe Lowood school, as the institute is run with an iron fist and military organisation. From the moment she wakes up, Jane realises that everything there is punctuated by the rhythm of the bell. All the girls act in tandem, yet Jane once again visually stands out, illustrating that her temperament has not yet been tamed by Lowood’s harsh set of rules.

Lowood School symbolizes a stifling sense of order as the girls standing in rows draw oblique lines across the frame, echoing the architectural symmetry of the place, enclosing Jane in a setting of light and shadows suggesting prison bars. Lowood School signifies the structural harshness of a system built on social hierarchy, to which the girls living in the school have to submit. (Letort 130)

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<sup>93</sup> See 1.2.3.3. Key Events in Relation to the Bildungsroman in *Jane Eyre*.





Figure 25 Jane Stands Out (Stevenson 00:08:21)

Thus, no real change occurs, Jane is still socially excluded and experiences a sense of entrapment, visually portrayed as she is being forced to stand on a stool resembling a scaffold, with the threatening shadows of the beams enclosing her. This scene bears a striking resemblance to Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, published in 1850, where the female protagonist, Hester Prynne, is being forced to the scaffold with her baby to answer for her alleged sins. This extract was also adapted to cinema later on in 1995 by Roland Joffé, starring Demi Moore as Hester Prynne.



Figure 26 Jane Eyre and Hester Prynne: Two Major Female Figures of Injustice (Stevenson 00:10:34)

Therefore, traumatic bullying still persists and materialises in forms such as being put on a stool, deprived of any food, as well as having food stolen from her own plate (Stevenson 00:12:00). Regarding Jane's characterisation as an outsider, Letort believes that lighting and shadows play a crucial role.

The director uses expressionist lighting to emphasize her singular position in the world: Jane's isolated figure is surrounded by ominous shadows that lay stress on her victimization. From Gateshead Hall to Lowood School to Thornfield Hall, her environment is designed in a sharp, hostile contrast of black and white shapes which

conveys neither a sense of security nor peace but dramatizes the differences between Jane's sensitive nature and the stiff conventions of Victorian society (Letort 130)

R. Stevenson even adds scenes of hardship encountered by Jane at Lowood Institution, to appeal to the audience's empathy. Indeed, Chairman Brocklehurst, a religious man in the novel, makes Jane and Helen walk in circles outside under pouring rain while carrying placards representing each their biggest sin, according to Mr. Brocklehurst, as well as weights. Jane reaches a new low, she is dehumanised by walking in circles like cattle. However, she holds her weight high, which serves her characterisation and proves her to be a rebel, perhaps, as her sign shows, but a proud and strong-headed one.



Figure 27 Jane and Helen Carrying the Weight of their Alleged Sin (Stevenson 00:15:35 - 00:16:08)

However, Lowood also marks the time of her moral journey. Jane encounters Helen Burns who, as in the novel, attempts to divert Jane from a path of hatred. She shows her another way, using words, and calms her down by showing her a little kindness and warm gestures. Be that as it may, her religious beliefs, only briefly transposed in this adaptation, do not protect her from death, for she succumbs to her cold caught during the aforementioned scene in R. Stevenson's adaptation, not in the novel. Strangely enough it is Doctor River who takes care of Jane and tries to cheer her up after Helen's death, consequently taking on the role of father figure for Jane. Still, this is particularly bizarre, knowing that in the novel, the parental figure is actually a mother figure in the character of Miss Temple, who is completely erased and replaced by a man in R. Stevenson's adaptation.

An ellipsis of several years, from 1829 to 1835, is ingeniously brought about by the passing ellipsis created by the still shot showing the turning of the pages of the Lowood Institution' Pupil's Records. The latter allows us to enter a new stage of Jane's learning and maturing pilgrimage. Mr. Brocklehurst does not receive her desire of becoming a governess well and tries to talk her out of it, diminishing her and hovering (Stevenson 00:23:14). This

scene serves to shed light on Jane's ambitious as well as tenacious character even more so when she stiffly and adamantly utters: "I am leaving Lowood Sir" (Stevenson 00:23:22). This new stage out of Lowood appears to be the most sensible choice for she is yet again depicted as a convict in front of the Institute through a shot that encloses her, one last time depicting Lowood as a prison and Jane as a convict owing to the horse straps which create a grid thanks to the perspective on her upper half body. Her debut into the world of work is hailed when Dr. Rivers says: "Jane, it is not every young woman that can face the world single-handed" (Stevenson 00:23:52), consequently painting the portrait of an adventurous Jane.



*Figure 28* Departure of Jane: Old Lowood Convict (Stevenson 00:23:37)

Everything seems to have changed for the better since Jane receives a warm welcome from Mrs Fairfax and gets to sleep comfortably and at peace, a true luxury looking back at her previous experiences. The two following frame shots depict a princess, namely Cinderella, in her bed with the castle framed in the window, when she wakes up and the birds sing to her. Therefore, from the moment she set foot on the Thornfield Hall property, there seems to be no danger, and Jane seems to have achieved complete bliss. To buttress this idea of bliss and fairy tale, the music broadcasted is the one coming from a child's music box. It is, in fact, Adèle's music box, Rochester's ward. Upon their meeting, Adèle wakes her new governess up, and to buttress this idea of bliss, Jane claims: "never in my life have I been awakened so heavenly" (Stevenson 00:29:13).



Figure 29 Jane's Fairy Tale Dream Come True (Stevenson 00:28:28)

Yet, the novel does not provide this fairy tale story, or at least not to the same extent. The audience is led to believe that Jane, thanks to her position as a governess, found a heavenly place on earth where she is treated on an equal footing with everyone and therefore can be heard, have a voice, as well as share good times with the family she is working for.

This idealised depiction provided by R. Stevenson may have fooled the 1943 audience, yet it does not work the same for a contemporary one better informed on feminism, as well as on cinema being a tool in the hand of the film director. Indeed, an adaptation inscribes itself in a place, *hic*, and a time, *nunc*. Walter Benjamin theorised this notion and stated that because an adaptation cannot replicate a *hic et nunc*, therefore the latter is bound to be unfaithful.

Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art always lacks one factor: its *hic et nunc*, its unique existence in the place where it is found. Its history was based exclusively on this unique existence (Walter 4).<sup>94</sup>

Thanks to B. Walter's second chapter, we understand, thanks to his *hic et nunc*, that a work is inscribed in a specific time and space other than that of its reproduction, which makes it *de facto* unfaithful to the source work. However, he pursues his argumentation stating that, in the end, one of the components that truly matter is the respect provided to the work of art's aura, a process over which it can prove an arduous task to have control over.

In the age of mechanised reproduction, what weakens in the work of art is its aura. A symptomatic process whose significance extends far beyond the realm of art (Walter 5).<sup>95</sup>

In fact, adaptations come up against the passage of time and changing social mores,

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<sup>94</sup> À la reproduction même la plus perfectionnée d'une œuvre d'art, un facteur fait toujours défaut : son *hic et nunc*, son existence unique au lieu où elle se trouve. Sur cette existence unique, exclusivement, s'exerçait son histoire (Walter 4).

<sup>95</sup> Ce qui, dans l'œuvre d'art, à l'époque de la reproduction mécanisée, dépérit, c'est son aura. Processus symptomatique dont la signification dépasse de beaucoup le domaine de l'art.

and this is as true for Fukunaga's adaptation as it is for Stevenson's one. There is a correlation between the historical period in which the work was reproduced and society's perception of it. Thus, a work of art is tinted and seen through the prism of a historical context that will never be the same, and therefore we will never have the same interpretation made by society at the time of the release of the original work as at the time of the adaptation.

At great intervals in history, the way in which human societies are perceived changes at the same time as their mode of existence (Walter 6).<sup>96</sup>

Art and the reproduction of source works can also have a political endeavour, as Walter Benjamin points out page 8. Hence, in the light of what we have just studied, we shall try to gain a better understanding of the many changes made in Robert Stevenson's adaptation.

The first striking element is the apparent desire to portray a passive Jane. Once in Thornfield Hall, Jane is but an observant. She is fully embracing the concept of the Angel in the House.<sup>97</sup> This can be verified through the first interaction between the eponymous protagonist and the film-Rochester, the latter utters the following few words in lieu of a polite and conventional introduction to his new governess: "Apologies won't heal my ankle [...] Now be kind to get out of the way" (Stevenson 00:32:42). From their first encounter onwards Rochester is rude, virulent and dismissive of Jane. In a nutshell, he is a brute yet it does not prevent Stevenson from showing Jane in awe of him. As always the camera shots and frame encompass the clear distinction between the film-Rochester and the film-Jane starred by Joan Fountain who makes her character harbour a naïve countenance.

Joan Fontaine's performance is far from the description of Jane in the novel. Fontaine is "portrayed [as] a relatively mild and mousy Jane with unkempt hair, a little Jane who usually accepts punishment with a look of grief rather than rebellion" (Dole 250). Such conversion into a docile and submissive character results in her loss of independence. Her first meeting with Rochester in the forest coincides with Fanning's opinions about Fontaine's characterization as Jane. Conversely, Rochester is presented with no sign of injury and, in lieu of this, he is "an idealized manifestation of wartime masculinity: vigorous, brave and commanding" (Fanning 44) (Dole and Fanning in Moyano-Rejano 18).

Indeed, the camera continuously strives to diminish Jane, as more often than not, she is portrayed from a high angle shot which tends to diminish and belittle her. This extensive submission leads to her loss of independence. Moreover, once back home, Rochester is seated in an armchair so big compared to hers that it enhances his character's superiority both

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<sup>96</sup> *À de grands intervalles dans l'histoire, se transforme en même temps que leur mode d'existence le mode de perception des sociétés humaines.*

<sup>97</sup> See 1.1.5. Women's Place in Literature.

visually and in their relationship. Yet, the only answer offered by Jane for so rude a character as Rochester is: “I can’t leave before I see you are fit to ride”. She is all softness and kindness and seems to have been stripped of the character of a rebellious child yet so prevalent in Lowood Institution. Thus, it poses issues for the feminism aspect of *Jane Eyre* is being shattered. Indeed, Jane is portrayed as the perfect indoor housewife; she is looked down upon and ruled over by Rochester, displaying features of toxic masculinity, a feature she is all too familiar with for it is similar to the one displayed by Brocklehurst. Her devotion to Rochester is glamorised by the latter who is shown enjoying his time in Jane’s company bossing her around: “sit down Miss Eyre” (Stevenson 00:34:06), “Go in the drawing room! ... I mean if you please. Excuse my tone of command. I'm used to say and do this”, (Stevenson 00:35:55), “ENOUGH!” (Stevenson 00:35:55) and she stops, the close up further shows her being subdued and thus submissive. Jane is shown obeying and in total submission, this devotion is part and parcel of the concept of the Angel in the House which is glamorised through their love story.



*Figure 30 Jane in Awe of Rochester (Stevenson 00:31:54, 00:33:43)*

R. Stevenson’s reenactment of Victorian values to reaffirm gender stereotypes during a time of war does not stop at the bounds of the two protagonists’ relationship.

Kaplan and Ellis [...] consider that the female models are not simply removed but are reconstructed in favour of idealized representations of motherhood circulating in the culture during and toward the end of the Second World War [...] idealized representation of motherhood typical of the period in which the movie was made (Kaplan and Ellis in Moyano-Rejano 7).

Indeed, the other feature of a good “Angel in the House”, on top of her devotion to her husband, is her commitment to her family. To compensate for Jane’s lack of family, Stevenson makes drastic alterations to the characterisation of Jane Eyre. Instead of presenting her as a woman full of desires and dreams, he chooses to present her as a surrogate mother to



Adèle, thus allowing the creation of a family unit composed of Jane, Adèle and Rochester. Jane is even wrongfully portrayed as an emotionally involved mother when holding Adèle's ballet shoes. In the following shots, their closeness in a single camera shot and their smiles all lead us to believe that they are one happy family, when in fact they are not, at least not yet.



Figure 31 Motherhood Portrayed as Jane's SafePlace in Thornfield Hall (00:38:45, 00:47:51)

Motherhood is a crucial aspect of the Angel in the House, which Stevenson seizes upon to further reinforce gender bias during World War II. This use of motherhood can be explained by a desire to emphasise the need for women to step back from their position in the public sphere when the war ends and make way for the returning men.

The only moments when Jane is truly excluded from Adèle and Rochester's life is when Miss Blanche Ingram comes to visit, during which Jane is prostrated and visually isolated, her body is not even turned in the direction of the guests. Later that night an over-the-shoulder shot materialises and conveys more vividly the suffering Jane feels at the sight of Blanche Ingram with the man she loves. Indeed, Blanche's visit interrupts for a moment their family act but does not put an end to the connection at play between the two protagonists.



Figure 32 Jane is put back in a powerless position (Stevenson 01:02:25)

However, an analysis of the concept of the Angel in the House allows us to see that the latter is rather complex and has many folds, all impacting Jane and Rochester's relationship. Indeed, as a man belonging to the public sphere, Rochester puts himself to the fore as being the household provider. This is best shown in the episode in which he takes her to town to buy clothes before their marriage occurs. This provider position adds another layer to the enforced patriarchal mores. In R. Stevenson's adaptation, Jane complies with and enjoys the situation. Conversely, the novel-Jane undergoes this situation as a loss of identity and talks to him about it.<sup>98</sup> The bride-to-be in the film looks fulfilled in her new role. However, his financial opulence does not mean her opulence, and he makes her know that he oversees the money when he takes some out of her palm of her hand to give it to a lady walking alongside their carriage (Stevenson 01:18:19).



*Figure 33 Rochester: The Provider Figure (Stevenson 01:18:09, 01:18:22)*

The other underlying concept which stems from the Angel in the House also is the idea that Jane possesses such intact virtue that she is believed to be able, and even expected, to enable Rochester to repent himself. Indeed, during their marriage scene she is presented as pure. This purity is conveyed by the immaculate white of her wedding gown, as well as the light coming directly on her. Moreover, she is joining hands holding a bible. As always, her gaze conveys the impression that she is in complete adoration of Rochester regardless. In comparison, Rochester appears guilty and is shortly after proven to be sinful because he has a gloomy gaze and stands in darkness. When his transgression is exposed, all the glances are directed his way, emphasising his sinful position.

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<sup>98</sup> See 1.2.3.3. Key Events in Relation to the Bildungsroman in *Jane Eyre*.





*Figure 34 Paradoxical Union Between a Saint and a Sinner (Stevenson 1:20:58)*

Moreover, Rochester is portrayed as the family protector and true hero through the recollection of the latest events at Thornfield Hall by Mrs Fairfax: “The next moment she lay smashed on the pavement before us” (Stevenson 01:33:32). While she explains what happened to Jane Eyre, there is an emphasis on what a brave, courageous and right-hearted, almost chivalrous, man Rochester is. The camera shots give him prominence for he is captured through a frame within frame by a full shot, whereas Jane’s character is still constrained by a medium close-up shot.

The difference between the two types of shots: close-up shots on Janes’s face, the better for us to read her emotions, whereas the general plan of Rochester allows us to take in his boldly posture, hinting at action. Once again, little room is given to Jane Eyre’s character, who, in the end, has not evolved. We could even go so far as to say that in Stevenson’s adaptation, the succession of prisons continues, and Ferndean is only the next one. In that sense, it seems that Stevenson completely disregards C. Brontë’s feminist stance in reappropriating the Bildungsroman plot to a heroine’s journey.



*Figure 35 Camera Shots Reflect Stevenson’s True Bildungsroman Hero: Rochester (Stevenson 01:34:10)*

In Robert Stevenson’s version, Jane is given no opportunity to cut ties with the concept of the Angel in the House. Indeed, she does not reach financial independence,

whereas she does so in two ways in the novel, that is through heritage and through her own wages as a teacher in the Moors. In the novel she also learns the existence of family relations entirely omitted in this adaptation. There is, in fact, the elision of a whole part of the novel that leads Jane to a stalemate.

As Atkins asserts, “the movie omits the entire episode concerning Jane’s independence, and no compromise is made; she simply never inherits the wealth or the relations” (Atkins 60).<sup>99</sup> Filmmakers removed Jane’s financial independence and the feminist view since it was too strong for Hollywood at that time, and instead they narrowed it down to a love story (Atkins in Moyano-Rejano 22).

Jane also undergoes a final blow, for she is in no way able to gain some sort of ascendancy and become his master, not even physically, contrary to the novel.

Not only is Jane monetarily dependent on Rochester after they are married, but the movie takes away Rochester’s physical dependence on Jane. In the novel, Rochester loses his eyesight and his right arm: “I was his vision, as I am still his right hand” (476). This gives Rochester the role of dependent, but in keeping with the subordinate character of the movie-Jane, Rochester does not lose his arm; thus Jane cannot be his master (Atkins 60).

Therefore, Stevenson’s Bildungsroman plot is more concerned with war propaganda against women’s place in the public sphere than with defending the feminist cause. Indeed, the process of confining the female protagonist, as well as the enforcement of patriarchal mores (i.e. the themes of motherhood, husband as the provider, decision-maker, and the family protector), are all strategies employed to re-impose the concept of the Angel in the House and, therefore, anti-feminist ideas in a Second World War context.

If the image of a woman during World War II was Rosie the riveter, the 1950s female ideal became Susie homemaker. Same women who were often encouraged to work on the factories to support the war effort were now urged to demonstrate their patriotism by staying home. [...] A huge propaganda effort took place to convince women that their place was in the home that didn’t want to wear overalls that really you were much more fulfilled if you could cook a good dinner than if you could make a wing on an airplane (NBC News Learn 00:00:00 - 00:00:42).

This anti-feminist propaganda is meant to go beyond the film in itself, and in 1943, it already impacted more than the fictional film-Jane, as the actress Joan Fontain only comes second in the opening credits of the film and her character does not have her last name, it only reads “Joan Fontaine as ‘Jane’” (Stevenson 00:00:32), whereas Orson Welles, who is credited first, is referred to as such: “Starring Orson Welles as “Edward Rochester” (Stevenson 00:0:27).

Jane and Rochester are both not treated equally in the cast. For instance, the credits at the beginning are biased by male dominance [...] The lack of her surname could stand for Jane’s alienation in terms of her non-conforming gender or her exclusion from other

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<sup>99</sup> Atkins, Elizabeth, “‘Jane Eyre’ Transformed.” *Literature/Film Quarterly*, vol. 21, no. 1, pp. 54–60, 1993.

characters in the film (Moyano-Rejano 14).

Therefore, from the promotional phase and the credits, Stevenson sets the tone; the adaptation promises to take a myriad of liberties even to the point of losing the hypotext's aura, as aforementioned by Walter Benjamin. Female characters are also deeply impacted by this anti-feminist stance. Indeed, Miss Temple is erased and replaced by Dr. River who, in an odd way, plays both Miss. Temple and St John Rivers. Yet, as Atkins suggests it: "because Miss Temple's strong moral character is given a male substitute, one cannot help thinking that this is a deliberate statement against the feminist purpose of *Jane Eyre*" (Atkins 58). Bessie has been softened, to better foster motherhood features, even though she used to scold Jane herself in the novel. Thus, female characters are either omitted to be replaced by a man or not mentioned at all or only present to foster patriarchal ideas.

R. Stevenson's conservative stance can also be partially explained by the mores of the time. Indeed, cinema suffered from real censorship in the form of the Hays Code. The latter, as developed earlier, censored any form of explicit sexual content as well as profane religious statements and banned scenes of violence.

Conform to the standards of the 1930 Production Code for films. This code dictates that "Repellent Subjects . . . must be treated within the careful limits of good taste." Included in the category of repellent subjects are: "Brutality and the possible gruesomeness. Apparent cruelty to children or animals." However, because the screenwriters eliminated John Reed's violent nature, the theatre audience does not understand the terror that Jane escapes when leaving Gateshead (Atkins 55).

The aim of the latter, enforced by a growing religious organisation,<sup>100</sup> was to make movies that "were suitable for the entire family" (Moyano-Rejano 21). In order to conform to the Hays Codes R. Stevenson had to make necessary alterations such as the change from the religious man Brocklehurst to a Chairman.

#### 2.2.2.2. C.J. Fukunaga's Adaptation of the Bildungsroman's Plot

Contrary to what is shown in R. Stevenson's adaptation, *Jane Eyre*'s soul-searching quest for identity is very much perceptible in Fukunaga's 2011 adaptation, for it is teeming with obstacles, be they physical or moral, which Jane has to overcome while still aligning with C. Brontë's *Bildungsroman*.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> "It was not until the Catholic Legion of Decency's overwhelmingly effective campaign against movie immorality in 1934 that the Production Code really took effect. In July 1934 the MPPDA, frightened by the Legion's threats, organized the Production Code Administration Office (PCA), with Joseph Breen at its head. For the first time, the MPPDA had the power to enforce its regulations: if any member studio released a film without the PCA's certificate of approval, that studio would be fined \$25,000" (Steinberg 389). List of "Don'ts and Be Carefuls" (Steinberg 390 - 398).

<sup>101</sup> See the definition of and aim behind the use of the *Bildungsroman* Plot in 1.2.3. The *Bildungsroman* Plot.

Moira Buffini, who wrote the screenplay, chooses to start Jane's journey *in medias res* as the film opens with ominous music, Jane's rapid breathing, and a fade to black illuminated by Jane opening a massive door to the outside world. However, while the inside seems hopeless and helpless against a black backdrop from which she flees and barely looks back, the outside does not seem to offer her a warmer welcome. Indeed, from the very first seconds her path is obstructed by a door, and branches intertwined to accentuate the complexity and confusion of what seems to be happening in the life and psyche of the protagonist Jane Eyre.



Figure 36 Jane's Obstructed Path (Fukunaga 00:01:15)

Our tracking of Jane, through an intrusive backward tracking shot with the camera focused on Jane's face, consequently capturing every emotion through a close-up shot, almost makes us feel for a second that we are the ones obstructing her way to finding her path on a journey that began long before we could witness it.



Figure 37 Intrusive Camera (Fukunaga 00:01:08 - 00:01:20)

Because the film opens *in medias res*, we have no clear indication as to what she might be running from, unless we have previously read the 1847 novel. The suspense and rhythm accelerate when she sets her mind to running which hints at a form of urgency. We can hear the sounds of her feet thumping on the ground and the rhythm accelerating as she

approaches, which successfully conveys the impression for the audience of hearing Jane's heart pounding rapidly in her chest. The overall few minutes of the opening set the tone for the rest of the film. The audience has been hooked and wants to know what awaits the main character who seems scared, lonely, or even lost in the grandeur of the area. Thus, sadness, loneliness, and danger are the main themes from the very beginning.



*Figure 38 Jane Running Away (Fukunaga 00:01:29)*

Her running away continues, and the theme of her embarking on a journey becomes even more visually apparent when the aerial shot gives us an advantageous viewpoint on the four possible paths between which Jane has to choose. Yet this shot affords an oppressive view over a deserted landscape, which highlights Jane's loneliness. This is a visual rendering of the psychological fact that Jane is truly at a crossroads in her life.



*Figure 39 Possible Paths (Fukunaga 00:01:36)*

Her journey through the moors is neither omitted nor romanticised. Jane has to face the elements like rain and wind but also anger. She is appearing in total despair on Mother Nature's lap, and this visual representation of her dire condition, accompanied by an airy, almost religious music in the background, supports Claire Bazin's choice to entitle her study



of *Jane Eyre*: “Jane Eyre, le Pelerin modern”.<sup>102</sup> What is singular is the superior status she enjoys, even going through dire conditions, forced to beg for help by knocking on the door of St John Rivers’ lost house; he defends her and argues that “she is no vagrant” (Fukunaga 00:04:40). This acquired status may seem a bit premature for the common audience unaware of Jane’s story, whereas, in the novel,<sup>103</sup> because it tends to follow a chronological pattern, she first asserts a strong sense of self, and then succeeds in imposing it on the people surrounding her; it is not a given, which seems to be the case in Fukunaga’s adaptation.



*Figure 40 Jane Embracing C. Bazin’s Pèlerin Moderne (Fukunaga 00:02:36)*

As aforementioned, Fukunaga constructed his adaptation on a circular pattern resulting in long flashbacks. The first of them goes back in time into her childhood, showing her as a belittled, scared girl, not so different from the adult Jane Eyre we see in the opening scenes, wandering through the moors. Yet, back then, it seems that she was cunning, playing tricks to escape reality. Indeed, she finds refuge from her cousin behind the window curtains to protect her body, the conspicuousness of the book she is holding preciously in her arms seems to keep the inner Jane, that is her soul and her sanity, intact, providing ways for her mind to escape the gruesome life she lives. However, the adult-Jane does not have reachable escapes in the moors.

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<sup>102</sup> See Part I. *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë.

<sup>103</sup> See part 1.2. *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë.



*Figure 41 Peculiar Childhood (Fukunaga 00:05:42)*

The sense of entrapment lingers throughout Fukunaga's adaptation, serving as a commentary on women's societal position during both the Victorian period and the twenty-first century. This theme is primarily conveyed through the use of frames within frames and visible directive lines, oftentimes forming a grid that either marginalises or entraps Jane Eyre. However, Jane appears to have structured her life around combating this feeling of entrapment, developing a feisty and combative temperament, as seen in the scene with her cousin or her banging on the door in the red room.



*Figure 42 Feisty Temper (Fukunaga 00:06:31)*

This recollection of Jane's childhood provides insight into the environment she grew up in, a setting marked by early experiences of feelings of entrapment and exclusion. Lowood School exacerbates these challenges. Upon entering Lowood school for girls, Jane is dispossessed of her clothes and subjected to strict rules that leave no room for individuality. This loss of identity is visually emphasised on screen through the girls' uniform attire, and she is placed on the pedestal of infamy by Mr. Brocklehurst in the hopes of taming her. However, Jane, thanks to her temperament and the support of her friend Helen Burns, navigates these challenges without losing her personality. Instead, she transforms her feisty temperament into an asset during the whole journey she has to pave for herself.

The triumvirate of Helen Burns, Adèle Varens, and the young Jane Eyre (Amelia Clarkson) shows the three aspects of deprived childhood (and, in particular, girlhood). The fact that Jane is an orphan, that quintessential figure in the history of both melodrama and the novel, who must make her own way and define her own place in the world, is compounded by a kind of figurative child-killing, for Mrs. Reed not only refuses to assume surrogate motherhood and pushes Jane out of the family but also tells Jane's Uncle John that she is dead (William 331-332).



*Figure 43* Lowood, Institution of the Loss of Identity (Fukunaga 00:15:21)

In essence, Fukunaga and Buffini not only transposed the Bildungsroman plot in terms of action, but they also constructed the 2011 adaptation around it, creating a world of visual metaphor that harks back to the core of C. Brontë's novel. Every new step taken by Jane in her life is emphasised and materialised by the opening of a door, a visual metaphor that applies to each phase of Jane's journey. For instance, the film opens with Jane running away from the life of a Fallen Woman,<sup>104</sup> symbolised by the opening of a door leading into a clustered path. The visual motif repeats when Jane arrives at the Rivers house, with a close-up of her being carried in by St John Rivers (Fukunaga 00:03:58). When she leaves Lowood School, there is once again a frame within the frame, capturing Jane passing through the massive entrance door under the curious and envious gazes of little girls (Fukunaga 00:22:56). Upon arriving at Thornfield, Jane walks through multiple doors, with the entrance and her bedroom doors standing out as symbols of a new and distinctly different life ahead (Fukunaga 00:23:30). The same motif is applied when they are in love, as the frame within frame technique captures the two lovers giggling while entering Thornfield Hall together (Fukunaga 01:20:33). When Rochester chooses to close the door on a chapter of his life that he did not care reopened but was forced to by Richard Mason, the significance of this action is accentuated (Fukunaga 01:05:37). This pattern continues throughout the film, and the examples provided offer a glimpse into Fukunaga's effective use of visual metaphor.

<sup>104</sup> See Part I. *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë.





Figure 44 Rochester Closing the Door on his Past Embodied by Richard Mason (Fukunaga 01:05:37)



Figure 45 New Step for the two Main Protagonists: Metaphor of the Door (Fukunaga 01:05:37)

Both in the outcome of Jane's journey as well as in the journey itself, the Bildungsroman plot is intertwined with other plots, such as the Romance plot, as in the novel.<sup>105</sup> However, this intertwining of plots sometimes provides a lens through which we can analyse both the novel and the adaptation that may seem problematic in terms of feminist achievements. Fukunaga's adaptation is no exception, and like the novel, it leaves ample space and blanks for authors, such as Jean Rhys, to read against the grain and create their own adaptations to address these aspects. Fukunaga's adaptation is a work of art in itself, presenting a unique vision that allows future directors to interpret and revisit *Jane Eyre's* story to align with their agendas and time period.

Indeed, oftentimes when Rochester is away, and Jane is already infatuated with him, the camera captures her wandering in circles within the walls of Thornfield Hall gardens. This depiction of Jane hints at her sense of loss and feeling of entrapment, even leading her to crush a flower in despair.

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<sup>105</sup> See 1.2.1. Subversive Writing: Intertwinement of Plots.



*Figure 46 Jane at a Loss Wandering in the Garden (Fukunaga 00:54:27 - 00:54:38)*

Even when the garden is brought indoors in the forms of yellow roses, it is only to better emphasise a feeling of loneliness and entrapment behind the grid window. Jane is arranging yellow roses for Rochester's guests, especially Miss Ingram, the colour of the roses can be interpreted as a sign of Rochester's deceiving character and Jane's feeling of treason.



*Figure 47 Jane at a Loss and Betrayed  
(Fukunaga 00:55:44 - 00:55:52)*

What can strike the viewer as problematic is that Jane only comes to terms with her inner turmoil when, still in the garden, Rochester confesses his love to her. In the initial scenes, we witness Jane as somewhat numb, deprived of self-consciousness. As the film progresses, Rochester re-enters her side, viewers observe a shift in Jane's composure. As the scenes progress, Jane's fluctuation of emotions in response to Rochester's display of affection or lack thereof becomes more apparent. This could be interpreted as if the purpose of Jane's journey was to find love and completeness through Rochester: "Fukunaga figures her as a unique individual searching for the ideal partner to recognize and respond to a self-conception that already exists (Mrenmoi 137).

Moreover, in the choice of camera angle and shots, the audience can also perceive a salient evolution in Jane Eyre's status. Indeed, in Fukunaga's adaptation, during Jane and Rochester's first exchange, the camera treats them as equals, even though one is the master the other a paid subordinate, an "inferior" (Fukunaga 00:44:12). The two are captured from

the chest up, thanks to a medium close-up which focuses on the face, allowing us a window into their emotions while still keeping the subject somewhat distant. Buffini even preserves the most important lines, aptly capturing the power struggle between the two: “I don’t wish to treat you as inferior. / Yet you command me to speak” (Fukunaga 00:44:12).



*Figure 48 Equal Treatment in Camera Shots, Angles and Lightning (Fukunaga 00:37:54)*

In the backdrop of their first real conversation, multiple issues are raised, ranging from equality between a paid subordinate and her master to class-related concerns. Indeed, despite Rochester’s claim to see Jane as an equal, he consistently brings her back to her position as a governess in a rather offensive manner.

Issues of class and the governess’s status incongruence (which Poovey also guided us to see) get a better treatment. Rochester first offends Jane by facetiously lumping her together with a sociological group. “What Is your tale of woe?” he asks, assuming that “all governesses have a tale of woe.” This offense is compounded when Rochester commands Jane to be present in the drawing room, where she overhears Blanche and Lady Ingram cattily disparaging governesses in general, treating Jane as if she were not there, nobody, not to be taken into account (Williams 336)

Yet, the 2011-adaptation’s focus shifts from the female protagonist’s physique to her intellect. Jane asserts herself and confronts Rochester when he assumes she has a tell of woe. Thus, Fukunaga’s film-Jane does not allow herself to be intimidated and exhibits greater control over her anger than in the red room. Her concern is more about protecting herself from Rochester’s mockery than succumbing to sadness, providing the film-Jane with a new level of charisma and depth. This shift allows for a closer examination of the power dynamics as well as Buffini’s choices in terms of screenplay.

Although the actress is attractive, neither does she have a particularly relevant physical presence nor does she use complements to enhance her beauty, but she dresses with the self-restraint and modesty expected of a governess (Manso 334).

I was dumb still. He bent his head a little towards me, and with a single hasty glance seemed to dive into my eyes.

“Stubborn?” he said, “and annoyed. Ah, it is consistent. I put my request in an absurd, almost insolent form. Miss Eyre, I beg your pardon. The fact is, once for all, I don't wish to treat you like an inferior: that is (correcting himself), I claim only such superiority as must result from twenty years' difference in age and a century's advance in experience. This is legitimate, et j'y tiens, as Adèle would say; and it is by virtue of this superiority, and this alone, that I desire you to have the goodness to talk to me a little now, and divert my thoughts, which are galled with dwelling on one point—cankering as a rusty nail.”

He had deigned an explanation; almost an apology: I did not feel insensible to his condescension, and would not seem so.

“I am willing to amuse you if I can, sir—quite willing; but I cannot introduce a topic, because how do I know what will interest you? Ask me questions, and I will do my best to answer them.”

“Then, in the first place, do you agree with me that I have a right to be a little masterful, abrupt; perhaps exacting, sometimes, on the grounds I stated: namely, that I am old enough to be your father, and that I have battled through a varied experience with many men of many nations, and roamed over half

(Brontë 113)

This equal treatment through the camera allows Fukunaga to showcase, through the prism of the Bildungsroman Plot a redefined masculinity. As previously discussed in the Romance plot and the study of the Male Gaze, Fukunaga and Buffini disrupt codified gender roles in cinema, by extension, in society. Surprisingly, they position Jane in a role of saviour; she is no longer a damsel in distress, as portrayed in R. Stevenson's version, but rather, it is Rochester who plays that role. They invert the gender roles in Jane and Rochester's relationship, depicting him as the one in need of saving from the fire and framed as sleeping beauty. Consequently, they enhance Jane's characterisation and have her assume an active role, using the imagery of a well-known tale and subverting its traditional narrative.



*Figure 49 Revised Masculinity: Inverting Gender Roles Inspired by Sleeping Beauty*  
(Fukunaga 00:48:34)

This new form of masculinity becomes particularly evident when, afraid that Jane will leave him after learning the existence of his previous union to Antoinette Bertha Mason, he lies on the ground, prepared to address her every need and question. This position symbolises



his loss of ascendancy over Jane, with the power dynamics now in Jane's favour. Indeed, she is the one sitting, composed, cold even, while he is the one begging and attempting to evoke her empathy and pity to regain her favour. The setting mirrors their initial exchange at Thornfield Hall, and comparing the two scenes provides valuable insight into this shift.



Figure 51 Reminiscent of Their First Exchange, Yet the Power Dynamics Have Changed (Fukunaga 01:30:17)



Figure 50 Downcast and Despondent Rochester Attempting to Reinvent Himself to Win Back Jane's Affection (Fukunaga 01:28:56)

Indeed, Jane is in control of herself and of Rochester. She refuses his mark of affection and caress, confronting a desperate Rochester who does not hesitate to let loose of his constraining masculinity, allowing his emotions to surface, crying and begging Jane for mercy. The close-ups let us in on the distress felt by both characters, emphasising the difficulty in which they both face, while still portraying Jane as she is, in charge of both this scene and her journey.

The camera angles in this movie highlight that the action is being experienced through Jane's perspective. This change allows Jane to exercise herself as another character inside the film instead of showing her as a passive spectator (Moyano-Rejano 48).



Figure 52 Jane's Refusal to Yield to Rochester's Demands: She is the One in Control  
(Fukunaga 01:30:34 – 01:33:35)

Yet, Jane has the last words and chooses, as in the novel,<sup>106</sup> not to fall into the trap of the Fallen Woman, stating: “I do... I must respect myself” (Fukunaga 01:32:56), setting the stage for a new step in her physical and emotional journey.

Leaving Rochester, albeit excruciating for Jane, has allowed her to be reborn. Indeed, as she leaves Thornfield Hall on foot and engages in a journey through the moors, Jane is portrayed from a bird's-eye-view shot which renders her both younger and smaller. This perspective allows us to see that Jane, in foetal position, is being reborn in the moors through the cold embrace of Mother Nature, a transformation only made possible away from Rochester.

In the novel, the function of the Moor House sequence is to interrupt the narrative momentum, to mark time while Jane is separated from Rochester. The narrative must delay so that we can feel the pressure of that separation. [...] So it will not do to omit these episodes, and this film is to be commended for highlighting them” (Williams 335).



Figure 53 Jane's Second and Third Birth (Fukunaga 00:08:00, 01:35:54)

In Fukunaga's adaptation we are led to believe that Jane was born three times. Apart from the first evident true birth, she is metaphorically reborn in the red chamber on the ground and embarks into a new phase of childhood as well as in the moors when she definitely sheds her childhood skin for an adult one.

<sup>106</sup> See Part I. *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë.

It is in this new skin that Jane slowly reaches the end of her journey. Indeed, thanks to St John Rivers she gets offered a teaching position, and shortly afterward, her financial independence. For once, she is portrayed as totally self-sufficient in her own house dispensing her classes. Thus, Mother Nature gave birth to a financially and emotionally autonomous woman.



*Figure 54 Independent Jane (Fukunaga 01:36:26)*

Her financial security goes beyond her wages, for St John Rivers breaks to her the news that she is “rich, quite an heiress” (Fukunaga 01:40:24). Only then does she truly feel included and part of a family. She asks St John Rivers to see her as a sister, and she is shown, again through a frame within a frame, in the entrance of the Rivers house in the middle of the three Rivers hugging.

I never had a brother or sisters. Please, let me be yours. - ST JOHN: You don't have to buy our affection. - JANE: Are you reluctant to have me? - ST JOHN: No, Miss Eyre. On the contrary... I'll write to my sisters, as you request (Fukunaga 1:42:23)

Therefore, she started as an alienated character, only seen as a dependent by her kin,<sup>107</sup> to being finally portrayed as included and having found a family of her choice in the Rivers household. This new acquired position seems to bring her solace as visible thanks to the close up shot of Jane and St John Rivers's embrace, as well as the dialogue.

The main external conflicts that she experiences are a result of the fact that she was rejected by her family during her childhood, for which reason she wants the Rivers to be her family. While in the novel, the family relationship between the Rivers and Jane ends up being discovered, in the film version that coincidence does not occur, so her inclusion in the small family is due to personal connection wishes, not linked to blood ties (Manso 336).

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<sup>107</sup> See 1.2. *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë.



*Figure 55 Newfound Brother and Sisters (Fukunaga 00:42:23 - 01:42:38)*

However, Jane Eyre cannot rejoice too quickly, as her newfound brother asks her to be his wife, even though, to Jane, his correlation of love to labour is antinomic.

He urges Jane to admit she is still in love with Rochester, he orders her to hide “that lawless passion”. He attempts to revise his position as her husband and offers her a marriage without love, which according to Jane, is [antinomic and] “[the very name of love is] an apple of discord between us” (JE 2011 01:46:03). (Moyano-Rejano 51).

Unlike Stevenson’s adaptation, Fukunaga’s one does not censor, or rather protect, but exposes the man of faith who utilises his position to force a union. Mr Rivers also employs the classic rhetoric of a patriarchal society, *i.e.* as soon as a woman does not emulate the mores of the society she lives in, she is no longer considered as worthy of consideration.

On the other hand, Mr Rivers wants to marry Jane, who rejects his proposal, whereby the clergyman reproaches her, accusing her of using “neither feminine nor true” words, although Mr. Rivers admired Jane, he finds in her a strong will and a vital determination that are inadequate in a woman. [...] Mr. Rivers is completely unable to detain her, despite he uses all the resources he possesses as a cleric, and as a man, to subdue her morally, even reminding her that “offending him she offends God”. (Manso 336)



*Figure 56 Different Paths (Fukunaga 1:45:00)*

Yet, on this matter, Fukunaga could not have made the message more explicit. Both characters are walking in two separate directions, crossing paths as indicated by the bird's-eye-view shot of the two walking in opposite directions. As their exchange ends in disagreement, the music intensifies, the violin becomes strident and the subjective camera, the



point-of-view shot, lets us see Jane's distress. She casts frantic glances everywhere, looking for something that we cannot yet understand. However, the audience senses that something is brewing when suddenly the wind carries Rochester's voice calling to Jane in the distance, bringing about the final resolution and precipitating her final journey home (Fukunaga 01:46:55).

Thanks to her return journey, Fukunaga allows us to draw some conclusions regarding Jane's achievements. Indeed, her refined garment, becoming her, and her travel in a horse-drawn carriage are both testimonies to her financial stability and independence. Finally, her transition from childhood to adulthood seems complete when she finds back the doll with which she spent her first night at Thornfield Hall.



*Figure 57 Completed Journey from Childhood to Adulthood*  
(Fukunaga 01:47:40, 01:48:30 and 01:49:53)

While efficient, the ending appears somewhat truncated to Williams, who laments the departure from Charlotte Brontë's carefully calibrated conclusion.

Jane's return to Thornfield Hall, the story of the fire and its consequences, and the reunion of the lovers. All of this is terribly rushed and truncated in the 2011 film, which has thus solved one set of problems only to create another. It manages to suggest autobiographical retrospection through flashbacks from the position of Jane at Moor House, and it solves the problem of introducing a whole new set of characters three-quarters of the way through - since they have already been introduced at the beginning. But as a result, it rushes the several phases of this novel's carefully calibrated closure (Williams 335)

### 2.2.3. The Transposition of the Plot of Desire

The plot of desire is also one which plays a significant role in Jane's characterisation in the 1847 novel, as discussed in section 1.2.4. The Plot of Desire. Indeed, it portrays Jane as an insatiable creature of want. Yet, the techniques used in visual representation necessarily differ from those used in literature.

Visual arts are highly codified, and the representation of the longing for something more, other, and different is no exception. Since the plot of desire may be the most

challenging to understand, I took the liberty of primarily focusing on the visual codes of representation of the Plot of Desire in a painting. To my knowledge, one of the paintings that best portrays the plot of desire is the one painted by Hopper in 1952 which reads *The Morning Sun*.



Figure 58 “The Morning Sun”, Hopper, 1952

*The Morning Sun* depicts a woman sitting on a bed, gazing out of the window. The woman’s distress transpires in her visual expression. She seems to be in the grip of monotony, her gaze hints at a spiritual torpor. She appears doomed and waiting for something different, something more. The viewer is drawn in by the realism and the pervasive pathos of the painting, which is almost a freeze-frame in the life of a fictitious character.

Hopper’s signature lies in the pure realism of an interior world and the impression of a freeze-frame, providing us with tools to study the Plot of Desire in the two adaptations under consideration. As a realist painter, Hopper captures the inner world of his characters, often in moments of depression and reflection, more than in joyous, lively instances. Hopper grants access to an inner world, frequently utilising windows through which we observe and interpret the inner lives of his characters.

Like Hopper, Fukunaga and Rochester manages to portray longing, want and desire for something not clearly defined, by situating his characters in frames within frames, fostering a feeling of entrapment. The pastel colours indoors contrasting with the bright ones outside, the fixed yet imprecise gaze are common features to Hopper, Fukunaga and Rochester of the plot of Desire.

### 2.2.3.1. C.J. Fukunaga's Adaptation of the Plot of Desire

Indeed, the imagery of the window, serving as a visual representation of Jane's longing for more, recurs on multiple occasions. For instance, once in Thornfield Hall, the eponymous character is pacing back and forth in front of the window, akin to a lion in a cage. Similar to Hopper's aforementioned painting, the lines in the film depict an enclosed Jane, echoing the experiences of the majority of women in her time living in a patriarchal society, as exposed by V. Manso.

Drawing from Gothic literature, the character is enveloped in a claustrophobic and repressive atmosphere, which can be understood as a metaphor of the situation of many women imprisoned in a private sphere dominated by men (Manso 328)



*Figure 59 Imagery of the Window as a Metaphor of the Plot of Desire (Fukunaga 00:31:20)*

Moreover, Fukunaga and Buffini deliver a joint effort, combining visual representation bolstered with Jane voicing her desire to go beyond what is in her immediate vicinity, to go and discover beyond the horizons she perceives outside the window.

I wish a woman could have action in her life, like a man. It agitates me to pain that the skyline over there is ever our limit. I long sometimes for a power of vision that would overpass it. If I could behold all I imagine... I've never seen a city; I've never spoken with men. And I fear my whole life will pass... (Fukunaga 00:31:20)

However, some critics argue that Fukunaga and Buffini's portrayal of Jane's desire for more falls short, for it should stem from anger rather than reverie.

The film does not do justice to the novel's feminism - in fact, it does not really try. The great passage in chapter 12, when Jane paces on the ramparts of Thornfield Hall and chafes against the limitations of her lot, is often rendered - as it is in this new film - at a window and made to seem wistful rather than angry. Jane speaks to Mrs. Fairfax: "I wish a woman had action in her life as a man does. I've never seen a city - never spoken with a man. [...] Thus the insistence that "women feel as men feel" and "anyone may blame me who likes" is translated into the dreamy romantic yearning of "I've... never spoken with a man." (Williams 335-336)

One of the significant events showcasing Jane's attempt to fulfil her need and desire for more unfolds when Rochester learns thanks to the imagery of the opened window, when

he bursts into Jane's bedroom to find it empty that she acted upon her words, and on the brink of dawn fled the uncomfortable situation he thrust her in. Thus, this scene both endorses Jane's plot of Desire and her taking control of her destiny and aspirations.



Figure 60 Open Window: The Metaphor of Jane Complying with and Taking Hold of her Desires (Fukunaga 01:34:40)

Jane's yearning for something beyond is even perceptible in St John Rivers' dialogue: "You are ambitious I think, and this little school will not hold you for long" (Fukunaga 1:37:26). This effectively captures Jane's characterisation as a creature of want, doing so Buffini assures the continuity of Brontë's literary legacy. The director set Jane's entrapment in different locations so as to prove that no matter what changes occur in Jane's life nothing will ever be enough to prevent her from wanting more. Indeed, the audience has previously been witness to Jane's entrapment in her childhood's household as well as at Lowood School when deprived of her identity and finally at Thornfield Hall with the grid windows and the enclosed nature. The audience might be tempted to think of her flight from Thornfield Hall as both her liberation and the end of the Plot of Desire. However, the character's inner turmoil does not settle down once in the Moor House, she even seems ill disposed to find contentment in the religious and constraining Rivers household and this is once again a message carried out by the use of grid windows, even worse, this time the outdoors is not even visible as Jane's vision is obstructed by the curtains. In this scene, the cluttered and suffocating window area as well as the backlit shot which plunges the protagonist into semi-darkness, leave Jane crestfallen as a shadow of her former self. Thus, her longing for something else, not clearly identified, is still very much alive if not more so than at her previous locations; for this time, she seems to have reached a new low.



*Figure 61* Representation of the Plot of Desire in the Moor House (Fukunaga 1:44:56)

What is not as apparent in Hopper's painting is the use of C. Brontë's and consequently Fukunaga and Stevenson's Gothic features in order to convey plausible traumatic events in a woman's life. This approach better explains Jane's yearning or need for more and provides the necessary backdrop to portray a growing and heightened attraction between the characters. Françoise Grellet explains that the term "Gothic" originated from 18<sup>th</sup>-century novels employing recurring elements such as a setting in a "far away castle or abbey which, with its tunnels, dungeons and strange noises, becomes a scene of terror, suspense and strange supernatural happenings (not always accounted for at the end of the novel)" (Grellet 99). F. Grellet also refers to Ann Radcliffe, one of the figurehead writers utilising these techniques in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) or *The Italian* (1797), as well as to Horace Walpole in his writing of *The Castle of Otranto* (1764). As mentioned in the first part of my master dissertation, the use of a Gothic plot structure is crucial to better grasp Jane's psyche.<sup>108</sup> Indeed, F. Grellet imputes the Gothic plot a "sentimental [dimension], the emphasis being on the fears of the heroines. It had become a literature of emotion, mainly written by women, and appealing to women, who could identify with the terrors of the young lady" (Grellet 99).

Gothic elements that nurture Jane's desire for more are numerous and permeate every aspect of the 2011 adaptation, whether in terms of visual or auditory representation. Indeed, Fukunaga recognises the Gothic plot as a useful tool and does not hesitate to resort to it on numerous occasions, starting with one of the film's promotional posters. In this poster, the setting in the woods, Jane's desperate gaze, the movement of her dress suggesting an attempt to flee danger, Rochester's ghost-like appearance, and the cold blue colour that pervades the

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<sup>108</sup> See 1.2.5. The Gothic and Autobiographical Elements



entire film poster convincingly convey the Gothic aspect of both the novel and its 2011 adaptation that they are promoting.



Figure 62 Gothic Film Poster. “Jane Eyre”, directed by Cary Joji Fukunaga, 2011

Manso explains that Fukunaga’s Gothic elements rest on a myriad of strategies throughout the film, encompassing aspects such as the location chosen, the use of lights, and the acoustic.

For Thornfield after the fire we have Wingfield Manor, also in Derbyshire, built in the fifteenth century and ruined during the English Civil War. Inside, the house seems to absorb light and sound, generating a sense of eerie foreboding and ‘the aspect of a home of the past: a shrine of memory’ (Brontë 90). Gothic suspense, mystery, and horror draw on these interior effects of darkness and muffled acoustics. The film’s lighting design is masterful – albeit in a way that has become quite conventional in films of Jane Eyre by now – with candlelight and firelight carving interiors within the interior. The frequent sight of Jane’s face, illuminated by the candle she carries, with the darkness looming around her, is perhaps the film’s most memorable visual image (Williams 332)

Indeed, the setting with which Fukunaga’s adaptation opens is ominous; Jane appears alone in a vast and cold environment at dawn. We can only hear her breathe and, occasionally, a horse neighing from afar, which does not bode well. Then, we can see Jane’s figure being enveloped by the morning fog, as if she were a ghost on a country track.



*Figure 63 Gothic Setting (Fukunaga 00:01:30)*

The gothic setting is also employed in Jane and Rochester's initial encounter in the woods. Fukunaga skilfully engages the audience's senses to evoke empathy for Jane, seemingly in peril, and intrigue for Rochester, who is still as of yet unknown to us. Indeed, we can hear ominous music, the cracking noise of the woods, and most intriguing of all, the muffled noise of an approaching and intensifying sound, reminiscent of Jane's heartbeat during the opening scene. The camera shots and angles also manipulate our emotions, creating a sense of impending danger for, as highlighted by the swish tilt shot, that is a vertical swish pan from a low angle shot to a high angle shot of Jane who is breathing loudly and frowning at something coming in the distance. Her facial expression, combined with the eerie sounds surrounding her, along with the camera's rapid cuts, intensify the tension of the audience until the sensational and intimidating appearance of Rochester within the camera frame.



*Figure 64 A Gothic Encounter (Fukunaga 00:33:10 - 00:33:19)*

The representation of Rochester as a ghost in the aforementioned gothic film poster foreshadows his later phantomatic appearances. The first one occurs when Jane is isolated in her new house in the Moors, during which we can hear Rochester's voice calling her name "Jane" over the whistling wind outside her new and own residence in the moors (Fukunaga 00:27:57).



*Figure 65 Isolated Jane (Fukunaga 00:27:57)*

The secluded environment as well as the phantomatic voice are Gothic elements that draw attention to Jane's newfound independence and social status. Beyond displaying a feisty temperament, she proves to be a determined and tenacious woman. Buffini ensures that this sentiment is reflected in the dialogues, subtly alluding to C. Brontë's novel.

I am not afraid of solitude. This is my first home where I am neither dependent nor subordinate to anyone. Thank you, Mr St John. / This is small and plain, as I told you. / Then it will fit me very well (Fukunaga 00:22:16 - 00:22:24).

The second occurrence takes place when Jane refuses to become St Rivers's missionary's wife and Jane hears, like us, Rochester's voice calling for her (Fukunaga 1:45:00). This idiosyncratic ability to hear, see or feel a presence no one else could is part and parcel of Jane's character. As a child, she was surrounded by a presence she could not explain and was afraid of. The most significant episode is the one now famously called the red chamber or red room episode.<sup>109</sup> In the episode of the red room, Jane startles with fear to the point of fainting after knowing that the room is haunted. She then collapses, and the bird's-eye-view does not reassure the audience, as it makes Jane appear defenceless and yet threatened, with the height and the shadows seemingly on the brink of crushing and possessing her. However, by the end, she has matured, as explained through the study of the Bildungsroman's plot, and she no longer seems bothered by Rochester's voice carried by the wind. However, we cannot overlook the suggestion that because the Gothic Plot is also a psychological and sentimental one, the presence and voice, as presented both in the movie and the novel, are actually expressions of her most inner and private desires put to the forefront.

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<sup>109</sup> See 1.2.3.3. Key Events in Relation to the Bildungsroman in *Jane Eyre*.





*Figure 67 Red Room Episode: The Pinnacle of the Gothic Plot (Fukunaga 00:07:42)*

F. Grellet adds that the Gothic plot also encompasses “dramatic moments of strong emotion, often linked to the erotic and the irrational” (Grellet 100). Although the plot of *Desire* is not limited to a sexual one; it is nonetheless part of Jane’s inner feelings. Therefore, Fukunaga takes on the challenging task of transposing Jane’s awakening but still subdued sexual desire into the film. During the first night of her arrival Jane is seen passing and glancing quickly at the painting of the naked body of a woman and a child, then she proceeds entering her bedroom where she is seen the next morning sleeping innocently alongside her doll.



*Figure 66 Jane’s Innocence Entering Thornfield Hall (Fukunaga 00:26:11)*

However, when she encounters Rochester and engages in a conversation with him, illuminated by the hearth in the lounge, Rochester adopts a very personable approach towards Jane. Both physically and verbally, Rochester gradually dismantles the master-governess relationship. Indeed, he leans his body towards Jane, and the camera suggests a moment of intimacy through a close-up with the focus solely on the male protagonist.



*Figure 68 Affable Rochester (Fukunaga 00:45:36)*

Rochester then verbally breaches even more boundaries, as his entire discourse is constructed on a double entendre.

When I was your age, fate dealt me a blow. And since happiness has denied me, I've a right to get pleasure in its stead. And I will get it, cost what it may. / Then you'll degenerate still more. / But, Miss Eyre, if the pleasure I was seeking was sweet and fresh, if it was an inspiration, if it wore the robes of an angel of light, what then? [...] / To speak truth, sir, I don't understand you at all. I fear the conversation has got out of my depth (Fukunaga 00:45:19).

Jane emerges from this exchange confused and likely titillated, as evidenced by her renewed interest in Fukunaga's reconstruction of a 19th-century painting depicting a naked woman. In her close examination of the painting, Jane acts as Rochester described her earlier on, "a curious sort of bird" in his description of Jane's personality: "I can see in you the glance of a curious sort of bird through the close-set bars of a cage: a vivid, restless captive. Were it but free, it would soar. Cloud high." (Fukunaga 00:46:30). Therefore, "[Jane is] being portrayed as a woman with sexual desires" (Manso 335), and her inner turmoil and aspirations are so evident that Rochester can provide an acute description of his new governess and offers us a definition of Jane and doing so of the plot of *Desire*.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> "In time, I think you will learn to be natural with me, as I find it impossible to be conventional with you; and then your looks and movements will have more vivacity and variety than they dare offer now. I see at intervals the glance of a curious sort of bird through the close-bars of a cage: a vivid, restless, resolute captive is there; were it but free, it would soar cloud-high" (Brontë 118).



*Figure 69 Jane's Sexual Arousal (Fukunaga 00:47:13)*

Thus, one of the many facets Fukunaga endeavours to convey to the cinema is Jane's depiction of sexual desire. This is a crucial element in refining Jane's characterisation as a complex Victorian woman; to do so, Fukunaga subtly alludes to her sexual desires on miscellaneous occasions.

Following Rochester's proposal of marriage to her, she kisses him passionately in the garden and inside the mansion. There are even interpretations that suggest a loss of virginity in this film. Other moments reveal a certain sexuality in Jane and a vindication of intimate space, as revealed by her body language when she takes her leave of Mr Rochester –after saving him from the fire and after removing the flower that he has placed in her hair. (Manso 335)

#### 2.2.3.2. R. Stevenson's Adaptation of the Plot of Desire

In Robert Stevenson's adaptation the plot of Desire is different, that is if considered transposed at all into the 1943 *Jane Eyre*.

Indeed, the only genuine instance when Jane displays a sense of the Plot of Desire is during her childhood. However, as Jane enters adulthood, she appears subdued, for her gazes outside the window no longer carry the same significance and yearning for the outside world as she does when in Lowood. As an adult her desires are tamed and conform to conventional gender roles.



*Figure 70 Jane's (Own?) Desires as a Child (Stevenson 00:12:25)*

Helen, where does that road go? / I told you before, to Bradford. / But, after Bradford? / Darby, I suppose. Nottingham and then London. / From London to Dover, and across the sea to France. And then over the mountains and down to Italy, and Florence, and Rome, and Madrid. / Madrid isn't in Italy Jane. / That road goes there all the same. We will drive along it one day, when we are grown up Helen, in a lovely coach. And I'll have beautiful curly hair just like yours, and I'll have read all the books in the world, and I'll play the piano and talk French, almost as well as you do (Stevenson 00:12:25).

Although this is the scene that hints most clearly at the plot of desire, it remains somewhat veiled. Indeed, Jane links her desires to the accomplishments expected of young women of the time.<sup>111</sup> The Governess' Place in the Victorian Society. So, she does not want so much anything else, she just demands to reach what society already expects of her faster.

Like Fukunaga's female protagonist Stevenson's one is looking outside windows on multiple occasions, yet these visual representations are deceiving for each time they do not genuinely portray Jane's restlessness. The message normally carried out by this technique is reversed and undermined by Joan Fontain's look of despair which portrays her as a damsel in distress consequently enclosing her in a gendered stereotype and perpetuating a systemic patriarchy. At 00:50:18, Jane is even looking outside in distress not because her female gender and her status do not permit her to enjoy the necessary liberty to let loose her restlessness and follow her impulses, but rather because Rochester is riding away on his horse like a prince. Her displeasure is often, if not always linked to him once she meets him. The following freeze frames also capture the representation of the private sphere reserved to women, with an enclosed Jane Eyre captured through a close-up shot behind the grid window. In contrast, Rochester's figure is depicted as going on an adventure on horseback, emphasising the public sphere belonging to men conveyed thanks to a long shot suggesting that men have the monopoly on the outdoors, the metaphor of the public sphere.



*Figure 71 Jane's Desire for Rochester (Stevenson 00:50:18, 00:37:00)*

<sup>111</sup> See 1.1.6. The Governess' Place in the Victorian Society.



*Figure 72 Jane's Gazing at a Distance (Stevenson 00:53:00)*

In another instance, Jane's gaze outside the window does not align with the idea of the plot of desire and further excludes her. Indeed, Jane is observing Rochester's company arriving at a distance. Thus, in this freeze frame Jane is but an observer.

As previously mentioned, Jane's characterisation suffers from Joan Fontaine's codified Hollywoodian style. Her gaze, gestures, and delivery of text pose issues and deviate from Charlotte Brontë's original characterisation of Jane. R. Stevenson transforms Jane's vindictive nature into that of a helpless woman, a transformation that raises concerns, as expressed by Elizabeth Atkins.

Ann Garner, who plays young Jane, performs her part exceedingly well. She is a plain, little girl with straggly hair, but her eyes are lively. Joan Fontaine as older Jane, however, is a poor characterization. Jane is supposed to be plain and small. As St. John Rivers describes Jane: "She would always be plain. The grace and harmony of beauty are quite wanting in those features" (366). Although Fontaine is not glamorous in the role of Jane, her beauty is not easily subdued, and there is a definite grace and beauty in her features. Fontaine also delivers most of her lines in a breathy whisper, which transforms Jane's determined nature into a helpless yet seductive nature (Atkins 58) (Emphasis mine).

Thus, Joan Fontaine's choice is not an obvious one for portraying an audacious young woman. The numerous alterations adopted by the screenwriter make it even more challenging to foster a plot of Desire, which, nonetheless, is at the core of the 1847 novel. Atkins's sharp criticism attributes the flawed plot of *Desire* to various sources.

The movie works as a nice fairy tale story, but in comparison to the novel, it is a complete disaster. The characters in the movie are reduced to good or evil, and all the spirituality which is so important to Jane, and those characters who influence her, vanish in the transformation from novel to screen. The 1930 Production Code is partly to blame for these failures, but more importantly, there seems to be a deliberate move away from Brontë's precocious Victorian feminism. By taking away Jane's psychological and material independence, and all that precipitates it, *Jane Eyre* becomes a simple romance which advocates patience in case the first wife dies. One hopes this 1943 version of Jane

Eyre has not been released in Brontë's heaven (Atkins 60) (Emphasis mine).

Delphine Letort also see Stevenson's adaptation as stifling the rendition of the plot of desire or making it impossible. She adds to the list the concept of fallacious fidelity to the novel to further manipulate public opinion in their favour and introduce anti-feminist concepts.

To conclude Robert Stevenson and Franco Zeffirelli have constructed *Jane Eyre* according to their reading of the novel, retaining and eliding elements that contribute to characterizing the eponymous character as a different persona in their respective versions. [...] Robert Stevenson attempts to create an impression of fidelity to the novel by including fake quotes read over by Jane herself (Letort 137).

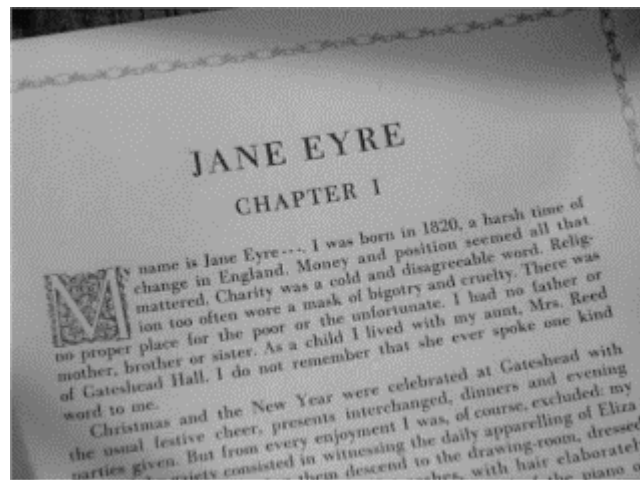


Figure 73 Deceiving Fidelity to the Hypotext (Stevenson 00:01:28)

The audience can deeply regret the 1943 mischaracterisation of Jane and the deprivation of her essence, as the gothic setting is very much present, and as in Fukunaga's adaptation and C. Brontë's novel, the Gothic, could have served as a stepping stone for Jane's personal endeavours. For instance, "Thornfield is presented with a greater focus on its Gothic dimension with ruins and ravens flying around the building (01:32:18)" (Moyano-Rejano 22).



Figure 74 Thornfield Hall Gothic Features Emphasised by the Black and White (Stevenson 00:31:24)

The audience can still attest to Jane's spirit of adventure in this scene for even in a spooky environment she keeps on walking. Yet, we know something is looming ahead because of the recurring sound of the bell as well as the music which speeds up and we also go from Jane's full shot to a close up one, emphasising Jane's ominous frowning which hints at an incoming danger.



Figure 75 Jane's Adventurous yet Conscious Character (Stevenson 00:31:26 - 00:31:30)

However, this isolated portrayal of Jane Eyre is short-lived, and D. Letort rather buttresses the idea of a missed potential. In her opinion, the Gothic use in this adaptation is counterproductive, further violating, and enclosing Jane instead of being the necessary setting to liberation and a woman's personal path to freedom of social constraints. Instead, Rochester consistently plays the role of the essential male saviour for his belle.

Robert Stevenson's interpretation of the novel conveys more violence as Jane's figure is always surrounded by dark shadows threatening to shatter her dreams. The noir undertones of the novel are put forward as the use of expressionist lighting creates a hostile environment made of geometric compositions generating a sense of omnipresent danger and entrapment. In this context, Rochester plays the role of a protective figure, thus adapting the story of Jane Eyre to Hollywood gender rules. (Letort 137)

Letort's arguments are visually transposed by Stevenson when the weather, acting as a component of the unfolding story much like in the novel,<sup>112</sup> unleashes a giant lightning bolt after Rochester confesses his affection to Jane, and she falls into his arms for protection.

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<sup>112</sup> See 1.2.2.4. Key Events in Relation to the Romance Plot in *Jane Eyre*.





*Figure 76 Saviour Rochester (Stevenson 01:17:19)*

The film-Rochester receives all the praises as he serves as Jane’s saviour and interprets the novel’s Rochester perfectly. This is unsettling because the director and his team invested more time and effort in finding a close match for Rochester’s character while intentionally diverging as much as possible from the novel’s portrayal of Jane. This was done to ensure that she would endorse the desired conservative values. Orson Welles, who plays Rochester, also displays useful features such as his bulging eyes that complement the Gothic environment. Notably, he shares common unsettling features with Peter Lorre, who starred in *M le Maudit* (1931), and this resemblance may occur as a bad omen.

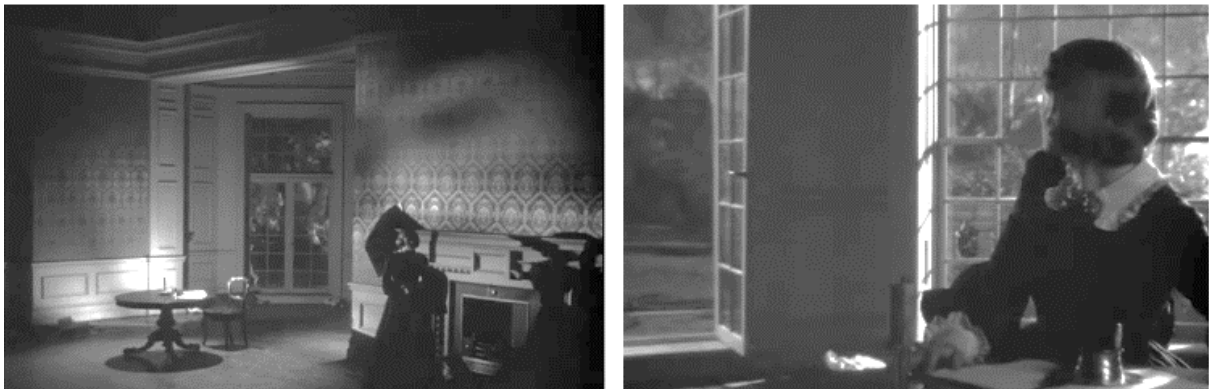
Rochester is the only character whose screen adaptation maintains the original characteristics set down in the novel. Orson Welles is perfect as the brooding Rochester, if one excuses his height: “He had a dark face, with stern features and a heavy brow” (145). “His shape ... I perceived harmonized in squareness with his physiognomy . . . though neither tall nor graceful,” Jane continues, “I am sure most people would have thought him an ugly man” (151-52, 16) (Atkins 58) (Emphasis mine).

In the following freeze frame, Rochester is depicted as a Victorian gothic archetype, dressed in the attire of a typical Victorian bourgeois, wearing fur, holding a stick, and accompanied by his dog, Pilot. Wind blowing through his cape provides him with an even more imposing stature. Rochester is portrayed as a force resisting the elements, with loud music playing in the background. All of the latter mentioned characteristics assert Rochester’s status as master and make him fit seamlessly into the Gothic plot due to his apparent harshness.



*Figure 77 Rochester Gothic archetype (Stevenson 01:05:23, 00:38:41)*

Thus, the 1943 adaptation incorporates all the necessary components of a Gothic setting that could provide fertile ground for Jane's vindictive nature to flourish. However, Stevenson consistently tramples on our hopes of finding the novel-Jane's never-ending longing for more. In the end, the Gothic setting in Stevenson's adaptation only oppresses the female protagonist while thrusting the male one into the spotlight. Indeed, one of the last mentions of the Gothic genre includes and benefits Rochester, as Jane complies with his almost telepathic call. His voice, much like in C. Brontë and Fukunaga's versions, is carried by the whistling wind. The wind, furious and tenacious that night, blows off Jane's candle, plunging Jane into darkness (Stevenson 01:31:38), and opens the French doors, which Jane opens again upon hearing Rochester's presence calling for her, "Jane, Jane" (Stevenson 01:31:38 - 01:31:56). The scene is carefully filmed with a bird's-eye-view shot, emphasising Jane's solitude, making the Gothic setting even more unsettling for the audience who knows that no one is physically present alongside Jane.



*Figure 78 Rochester's Gloomy Call for Jane (Stevenson 01:31:56)*

**PART III**  
**Didactic Approach**

### 3.1. The IMPORTANCE OF A CROSS-MEDIA EDUCATION

#### 3.1.1. *L'Adaptation comme moyen d'entrer dans la littérature*

Forts de ces analyses, nous pouvons désormais avancer qu'il y a une profusion et même une réelle nécessité à l'adaptation tout particulièrement dans l'enseignement.

Lors de mes recherches à ce sujet, j'ai notamment rencontré le terme de « *cross-media education* » que nous pourrions paraphraser par le terme de « *via media* » en ce qu'il crée un pont entre la littérature et les apprenants du monde. Les adaptations permettent aussi d'aller au-delà des questions de classe ou encore d'époque. En effet, ces dernières, et tout particulièrement les adaptations filmiques, permettent aux apprenants de s'immerger de manière visuelle et auditive dans un contexte peu, voire pas, familier. Cela est démontré par les exemples de C. J. Fukunaga ou encore R. Stevenson qui mettent en lumière un roman victorien qui transcende les classes, les âges et les horizons. Cette immersion de l'apprenant dans une adaptation littéraire est permise grâce à de nouvelles formes, plus familière telles que le cinéma, mais aussi les jeux vidéo ou encore la télévision ou le théâtre. Ces arts plus visuels vont permettre de captiver l'attention des apprenants plus ou moins sensibles à la littérature.

Les adaptations favorisent également une approche plus profonde des œuvres littéraires originales. En effet, elles rendent possible l'exposition de l'apprenant à plusieurs visions et mises en lumière, d'une même œuvre littéraire. Ces fuseaux qui se croisent permettent alors une réflexion et une approche plus critique et encouragent comme nous l'avons fait en deuxième partie une comparaison tant avec l'œuvre source que nous avons appelé « hypotexte » pour reprendre un terme de Grenette, mais aussi entre les choix des directeurs par exemple pour les films. En somme les différents choix artistiques des créateurs dans des médias variés doivent être interrogés.

Les adaptations notamment filmiques sont aussi un moyen dynamique d'entrer dans la littérature. Elles offrent une expérience visuelle et auditive immersive, et ce, à travers les dialogues par exemple, mais ne se résument pas seulement à cela. En effet, la communication dans les films se fait également à travers les plans de coupes, les angles de caméra, les plans de caméra, mais également la musique, des métaphores visuelles ou encore des jeux de regards ; en somme, une adaptation filmique nous plonge dans un monde tout aussi riche que la littérature. Ainsi les différents médias peuvent former une synergie et permettre une éducation pluridisciplinaire riche et variée qui souligne l'importance de l'adoption de la *via*

*media* dans l'enseignement et ce même dans les petits niveaux. En effet dans les petites classes, aussi, les bénéfiques se font ressentir puisque dès le plus jeune âge, les élèves peuvent ainsi avoir accès aux codes d'un monde visuel dans lequel ils baignent déjà. De plus, si je ne prends en compte que ma matière, cela les prépare également à leur cursus de LVA qui au lycée voit de plus en plus dans ses programmes l'ajout d'étude de films que ce soient des adaptations ou non.

### 3.1.2. L'importance de développer un esprit Critique – Dérives des adaptations

Toutefois il ne faut pas s'y méprendre, l'étude des adaptations notamment filmiques d'un texte littéraire comme celles étudiées lors de ma deuxième partie s'affranchissent du cadre imposé par Charlotte Brontë pour mieux s'approprier l'histoire de *Jane Eyre*. En effet, les réalisateurs se jouent de l'histoire et mettent à profits les codes du cinéma de différentes manières rendant ainsi transparentes leurs motivations premières. Aussi, il est impératif de maîtriser tant le texte original que les codes du cinéma ainsi que de cultiver un esprit critique afin de ne pas s'engager naïvement dans le paysage des réappropriations politiques ou réinterprétation médiatiques.

En effet, les adaptations filmiques peuvent conduire à la dénaturation d'une œuvre originale ou comme le disait Walter Benjamin à la perte de son aura, à ce titre nous pouvons penser à l'adaptation de R. Stevenson qui bien que chronologiquement proche du roman de 1847 ne rend en définitive que très peu compte des messages de ce dernier et plus encore, les détourne à des fins de propagandes antiféministes.

En définitive, en promouvant une éducation pluridisciplinaire qui permet ainsi de développer l'esprit critique des apprenants, l'éducation nationale se fait alors le barrage vers une consommation passive des arts visuels par les apprenants. Aussi, des apprenants qui auront conscientisé l'importance des choix des artistes tant les metteurs en scènes que les auteurs seront mieux équipés et ceci leur permettra une appréciation plus profonde de la diversité des formes artistiques qui parviennent tout de même à préserver l'aura d'une œuvre originale.

Étant actuellement contractuelle au collège Aristide Briand pour des classes de cinquième je vais à mon tour adapter le roman de Charlotte Brontë pour vous proposer une séquence qui se veut être une initiation au monde de *Jane Eyre* et à ses adaptations.

### 3.2. SÉQUENCE PÉDAGOGIQUE

**Titre de la Séquence :** *JANE EYRE*

**Notion / Axe du programme :** Langages

**Thématiques :** Les langages artistiques et leurs interactions : peinture, musique et chansons, poésie, cinéma et théâtre, littérature, bande-dessinée, science-fiction. Représentation de sculptures, tableaux, œuvres architecturales, monuments.

**Activités langagières dominantes :** [PE : Production Écrite – POc-i : Production Orale en Continue, Production Orale en Intéraction – CE : Compréhension Écrite – CO : Compréhension Orale]

**Niveau :** Classe de cinquième – Niveau A2 CECRL

**Descripteurs du CECRL correspondant au niveau visé :**

**Comprendre :**

Écouter : Je peux comprendre des expressions et un vocabulaire très fréquent relatifs à ce qui me concerne de très près (par ex. moi, ma famille, les achats, l'environnement proche, le travail etc.) Je peux saisir l'essentiel d'annonces et de messages simples et clairs.

Lire : Je peux lire des textes courts très simples. Je peux trouver une information particulière prévisible dans des documents courants comme les petites publicités, les prospectus, les menus et les horaires et je peux comprendre des lettres personnelles courtes et simples.

**Parler :**

Prendre part à une conversation : Je peux communiquer lors de tâches simples et habituelles ne demandant qu'un échange d'informations simple et direct sur des sujets et des activités familiers. Je peux avoir des échanges très brefs même si, en règle générale, je ne comprends pas assez pour poursuivre une conversation.

S'exprimer oralement en continu : Je peux utiliser une série de phrases ou d'expressions pour décrire en temps simples ma famille et d'autres gens, mes conditions de vie, ma formation et mon activité professionnelle actuelle ou récente.

**Écrire :**

Écrire : Je peux écrire des notes et messages simples et courts. Je peux écrire une lettre personnelle très simple, par exemple de remerciements.

**La séquence que je propose est problématisée autour de la question suivante :**

*“What does the 1847 novel reveal about the Victorian period? What is one of the novel’s salient plots later on adapted to cinema?”*

Cette problématique contrairement à la problématique universitaire formulée plus haut pourra être fournie aux élèves.

Ma séquence comportera donc **7 séances** réparties sur **2 étapes**.

Voici l’énoncé de la **tâche finale** que j’ai retenue pour cette séquence [POC] :

*In the lead up to the upcoming film convention focused on adaptations of Jane Eyre, the organisers have requested that you design your own film poster, drawing inspiration from distinctive elements of the Gothic plot. 🤔 Prepare to showcase your creation at the film convention gathering! 🎬*

**Afin de permettre la réalisation de cette tâche, j’ai identifié les objectifs suivants :**

### Culturels

Découverte du monde littéraire anglophone de l’époque Victorienne à travers *Jane Eyre* ainsi que des adaptations filmiques qui en ont découlées.

### Communicationnels

#### **Linguistiques**

##### Grammaire

- Prétérit *she was, she had, her pen name was* ;
- Rebrassage de la construction de l’ordre des phrases : *Sujet + Verbe + Complément, adjectif avant le nom* ;
- Construction d’hypothèses :
  - grâce aux modaux: *might, may, must be... because I can see....*
  - grâce à: *she looks...; She seems...; she sounds....*

##### Phonologie

- Aborder la prononciation du [ed] lors du point de grammaire sur le prétérit : /t/ /d/ /id/ : *escaped, wanted* ;
- Bonne prononciation des mots nouveaux : *scary, gloomy, horrifying* (cf. *Lexique*) ;



### Lexique

- Vocabulaire du Gothique : *scary, gloomy setting, chilly, spooky, horrifying, ghost, intimidating* ;
- Vocabulaire du Roman : *plot, synopsis, character, protagonist, antagonist, synopsis, reader, author, title, synopsis, published*;
- Vocabulaire du Film : *adaptation, film poster, synopsis, title, director, trailer*;
- Vocabulaire de la Famille : *father, mother, aunt, sisters, brother, husband*.

### **Sociolinguistiques**

- Respect des conventions sociales pour s'exprimer : *no cursing etc* ;
- Adapter son niveau de langue à son interlocuteur ici langage courant - ni trop soutenu, ni trop familier : *\*I don't, \*we're feeling* ;
- Avoir une voix qui porte afin d'être entendu de tous et de mettre en avant sa création.

### **Pragmatique**

- Décrire une image : *at the bottom, in the middle = in the centre, on the film poster etc* ;
- Raconter une histoire, présent de narration : *Jane finds out, Jane inherits etc.*

### **Educatifs**

#### Parcours possible :

- Education artistique et culturelle : *création de l'affiche du film de Jane Eyre ancrée culturellement dans un roman de la littérature anglaise grâce à l'étude du roman et des adaptations en elle-même à travers l'intrigue du gothique*).
- Parcours citoyen : *Egalité homme femme, pen names*.

### **Domaines du Socle Concernées :**

- Domaine 1 : Les langages pour penser et communiquer.

## PRÉSENTATION DES ÉTAPES D'EXPLOITATION

### Étape 1 : BRONTË Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*, 1847.

Séance 1 : Anticipation de la séquence

**L'intérêt pour la Tâche Finale** : Étudier des visuels de couvertures de livres et voir ce que les maisons d'éditions ont décidé de mettre en avant. À travers différentes couvertures de livres les apprenants pourront émettre des hypothèses, grâce à *might*, *may* et *must be* afin de répondre à trois grandes questions : *Who*, *When*, *What*.

**POi** (Production Orale en interaction) : moments d'échanges d'hypothèses entra pairs.

**POc** (Production Orale en continu) : lors du passage d'un porte-parole du groupe afin de présenter son document, ses spécificités et les hypothèses de son groupe.

**À la fin de cette séance je veux que les élèves** : soient capables d'émettre des hypothèses sur un document visuel.

Documents :<sup>113</sup>



Modalité de la séance :

- La classe s'organisera en quatre groupes afin que tous aient une couverture du roman différente. L'objectif est qu'ils ne se les montrent pas afin de créer un déficit informationnel qui créera un réel besoin chez les apprenants de partager leurs informations.

<sup>113</sup> De gauche à droite les couvertures du roman viennent des éditions : Pocket Classics, Signet Classic, Bellin Éducation, Signet Classic.

## Accueil des apprenants

### Appel

### Rituel :

- Le rituel suivant nous permettra de réactiver le vocabulaire de la description d'image de manière actionnelle. Si ces connaissances n'étaient pas maîtrisées ou ont été oublié le document ci-après laisse suffisamment d'indices afin de permettre aux apprenants de déduire ce qui a été couvert par la peinture.

### Document :<sup>114</sup>



### Activité n°1 :

#### Modalité : En groupe.

#### Consignes :

- Point de méthodologie / Stratégies transférables : *List the -Wh questions you know and try to determine what you are looking for when you answer those questions.*
- *Describe the document and be ready to present it to your classmates.*
- *Look at the document: What type of document is it?*
- *Look at the title, the image, and the names: What can you say about it? Make some hypotheses on the document.*

#### Productions attendues :

- **Who:** *we need to look for characters, boys, girls, men, women.*
- **What:** *we need to look at the paratext, the specificity of the document, the title.*
- **When:** *we need to try and determine maybe the year, months, the season, time of day it is happening in.*
- **Where:** *we need to understand if the scene takes place outside (ex: forest,*

<sup>114</sup> Document réalisé par mes soins.

À l'avenir, toute provenance de documents non justifiée impliquera que je les ai réalisés.

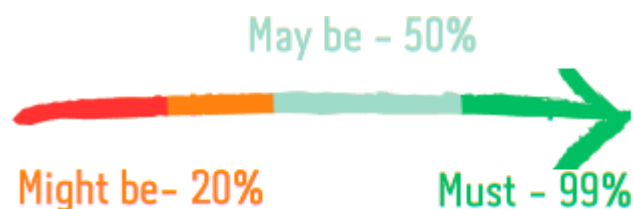
playground), inside (in a school, at home etc.)

- In the foreground I can see...
- 1) This document might be a book cover. The title reads Jane Eyre. Charlotte Brontë must be the author. The book / This novel might be about a dangerous fire in Jane Eyre's house or about a meteorite crashing into the character's house. The house at night looks scary.
- 2) This novel might be about a love story between the man and the woman.
- 3) This document may be a flyer for a museum exhibition.
- 4) This document is the painting of a mother, a big sister and a servant at home with three young girls. This document looks old because the woman and the girls are wearing old clothes.

### **PRL (Pratique Raisonnée de la langue) :**

- La PRL se fait en plusieurs étapes. Tout d'abord elle intervient lorsque les élèves en ont nécessairement besoin. Dans un premier temps les apprenants essaient de formuler leur phrase, s'entraide entre eux dans le besoin puis on peut généraliser la règle à toute la classe afin qu'ils puissent la mettre en application dans le reste des activités.

*I can see ... and ... so it might be / may be / must be ...*



Activité n°2 : Retour en plénière afin de procéder à une mise en relation.

- Grâce à la description faite de leur document dans l'activité 1 chaque groupe désignera un porte-parole afin d'aller présenter à la classe son document.
- L'émissaire révélera par la suite le document et partagera les hypothèses formulées par son groupe.
- Le reste des apprenants pourront alors donner leurs opinions quant aux hypothèses exposées.

Activité n°3 : Classe entière

Consignes :

- Look at all the documents: What is surprising?

### Productions attendues :

- All the documents have the same title: *Jane Eyre*, *Charlotte Brontë*, but = however, two visual representations = book cover = flyers = paintings look older than the other two. But some look older vs. more modern than the others.

### Trace Écrite (envisagée):

- Conception de la trace écrite à partir de productions d'élèves.
- Cette dernière doit également reprendre les points vus en classe tels que : *might*, *may*, *must* mais aussi *in the middle in the foreground*, *on the right hand side* ainsi que les mots de vocabulaires récemment appris avec leur transcription phonétique.

### *Jane Eyre*

**WHAT:** This document **may** /'meɪ/ (*cake, take*) **be** (50% sure) a novel **entitled** /aɪ/ (*my, eye*) *Jane Eyre* or it **might** /'maɪt/ **be** (20% sure) the title of a **painting** or a the title /'tɑːtʃ/ of a **museum** /mjuː'ziːəm/ **exhibition**.

**WHO:** *Jane Eyre* **might be** a **love story** between the man we can see in the **background** and the woman we can see in the **foreground**. **But** /'bʌt/ (*love, bus*) = **However**, it **may** also **be** the story of a meteorite crashing on Jane's house.

**WHEN:** Two documents **look** /'lʊk/ (*book, look*) = **seem** older than the others **so** /'səʊ/ *Jane Eyre* **might be** the story of a twenty-first woman or an old story **because** /bɪ'kɔːz/ the woman on the left-hand side of the document and the girls on the right-hand side of the document **are wearing** **old** /'əʊld/ **clothes** = dresses.

### Travail à la maison :

- Apprentissage de la leçon, tant son contenu que sa prononciation ainsi que l'apprentissage du vocabulaire nouveau et du point de PRL.

### Stratégies Transférables :

- Se questionner sur les points communs et différences entre des documents ;
- Se servir des WH questions et de ce qu'on en attend pour savoir dans quelle direction aller.

## Séance 2 : Wall Quest n°1/2 – Charlotte Brontë

**L'intérêt pour la Tâche Finale** : Confirmer ou infirmer les hypothèses émises en anticipation de séquence ainsi qu'un approfondissement des connaissances sur la littérature Britannique. En vue de la TF il est important de comprendre qu'à l'origine *Jane Eyre* est un roman de Charlotte Brontë paru en 1847. Cette parution ne s'est pas faite sans précautions de la part de C. Brontë et reflète les mœurs de l'époque Victorienne.

**CE** (Compréhension écrite) / **POc-i** (Production Orale en continu et en interaction)

Accueil

Appel

Rituel

Rebrassage et récapitulatif de la séance précédente

### ANTICIPATION

- L'anticipation de séquence, *cf.* séance 1, nous servira de fondations sur lesquelles appuyer toutes les séances de cette séquence ;
- En l'occurrence nous zoomerons sur le nom et prénom « Charlotte Brontë » d'une des couvertures du roman et les mettrons en parallèle avec une image de Charlotte Brontë en leur demandant d'émettre des hypothèses quant à son identité. Ainsi nous rebrasserons les modaux *might, may, must* dans la perspective d'un apprentissage spiralaire et ferons ressurgir les hypothèses de la séance précédente qui ont pu être amenés sur l'identité de Charlotte Brontë.

Modalités : *Wall Quest* par groupe.


- Un *Wall Quest* est une activité qui se prête au travail de groupe et permet à une classe hétérogène d'avancer au même rythme. En effet, chaque groupe aura une feuille de suivi à remplir grâce aux informations qu'ils pourront trouver en se baladant dans la salle : les documents imprimés sont disposés sur les murs et sont une mine d'information de laquelle les apprenants doivent se saisir afin de compléter leur *Wall Quest*.
- Afin de créer un vrai besoin langagier entre les apprenants, on créera un déficit informationnel. En effet, la classe se divisera en deux pôles : les groupes qui travailleront sur la compréhension globale, les autres groupes, eux, travailleront sur la compréhension détaillée. Une fois, leurs activités terminées chaque groupe devra partager ses informations avec le second grâce à un porte-parole.
- Cette mise en commun se fera en deuxième partie d'heure et sera suivie d'une PRL sur le prétérit et la prononciation des terminaisons -ed en classe entière.

## COMPRÉHENSION GLOBALE

### Activité 1 :

**À la fin de cette étape je veux que les apprenants comprennent que :** C. Brontë est une autrice qui fait partie du canon de la littérature anglaise, son influence se reflète dans les adaptations qui sont vouées à ses œuvres, en particulier celles de *Jane Eyre*.

Document imprimé et affiché sur un des murs de la salle :

	<p><b><u>Charlotte who?</u></b></p> <p>Charlotte Brontë was born in 1816 and died in 1855. She was a renowned Victorian woman writer. Today, she is a world-famous novelist. In 1847, she wrote <i>Jane Eyre</i>, her first novel, as well as <i>Shirley</i> (1849), <i>Villette</i> (1853) and <i>The Professor</i> (1857), she also published poems with her sisters. She is an author who transcends eras because her works are often transposed into different forms of art. For example, her famous novel <i>Jane Eyre</i>, is regularly adapted into plays, ballets, and films, such as the one directed by R. Stevenson in 1943, or the more recent adaptation by C.J. Fukunaga, released in theatres in 2011.</p>
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### Stratégies Transférables :

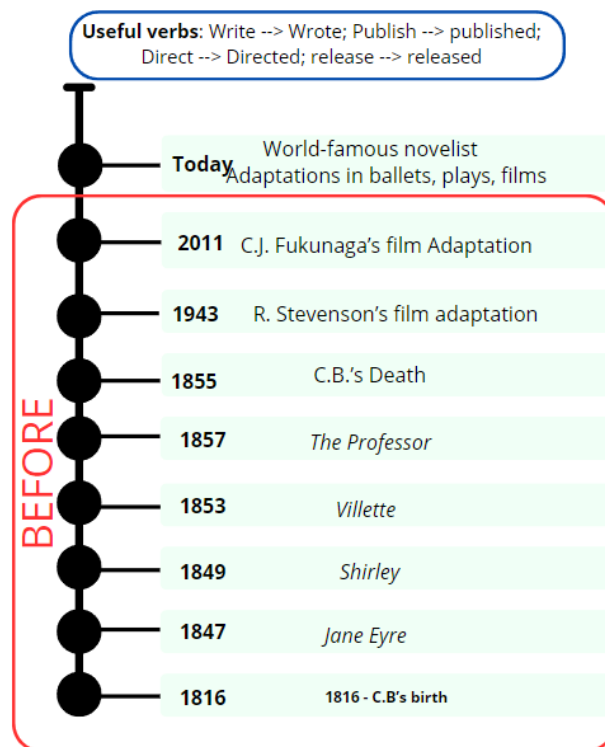
- Une majuscule peut signaler un nom propre ;
- Les titres de roman sont écrits en italique dans un texte ;
- Les chiffres peuvent indiquer des dates ;
- Mots transparents : *adaptations, form of arts etc.*

### Consignes :

- Check your hypotheses and try to answer the WH questions.
- Once you have gathered all the information, please fill in Charlotte Brontë's ID card:
- /!\ Vous n'avez le droit d'envoyer qu'un émissaire à la fois qui pourra récolter les informations et vous les transmettre en anglais. Pour rappel : l'émissaire n'a pas le droit de prendre de notes et ne peut rapporter qu'une information à la fois qu'il devra délivrer à son groupe en produisant une phrase complète.







## COMPRÉHENSION DÉTAILLÉE

### Document :

BELL, Currer. *Jane Eyre*. Elder & CO. London, 1847.

BRONTË, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. Elder & CO. London, 1847.

**1/ À la fin de cette étape je veux que les élèves :** se posent des questions quant à l'identité de l'auteur de *Jane Eyre*.

### Consignes :

- Highlight the similarities and circle the differences you can witness. What deductions can you make?

### Productions attendues :

- Maybe there are two different *Jane Eyre*. Charlotte Brontë may be a woman who poses as a man. Currer Bell might be a man who pretends to be a woman. Maybe there are different authors behind the publication of *Jane Eyre*.

### Stratégies transférables :

- Importance du paratexte ;
- Penser à comparer ce qui semble similaire en cherchant des indices autour.

**2/ À la fin de cette étape je veux que les élèves :** comprennent ce qu'est un nom de plume et ce qui a poussé Charlotte Brontë à en utiliser un lors de la publication de *Jane Eyre*.

Document imprimé sur un des murs de la salle :

### **Who wrote *Jane Eyre*?**



A pen name is a name the author chooses instead of his or her real name when publishing books like novels, poems, short stories etc.

During the Victorian period (1837-1901), people felt that it was unnatural for women to write and that they were simply not as good as men writers. So = Therefore, to be taken seriously Charlotte Brontë and her sisters decided to use masculine pen names. They all adopted the last name Bell and chose a male first name, for example, Charlotte chose to be Currer Bell.

#### Consignes :

- Read the text and find out if you were right or wrong.

#### Productions attendues :

- Only one person wrote *Jane Eyre* that is Charlotte Brontë. However, = But, to be taken seriously her and her sisters decided to pretend to be men and took on male pen names. Charlotte Brontë chose to write under the pen name: Currer Bell.

#### Consignes :

- Pick out the verbs. Try to determine if they refer to the present or the past. Look at their construction: is there something unusual?

#### Productions attendues :

- Is: present / chooses: chose (X2) / felt: feel / were: be / be taken / decided: decide / adopted: adopt.
- Les verbes n'ont pas la même forme que d'habitude car ils sont conjugués au passé. Certains verbes sont réguliers auquel cas on leur ajoute la terminaison -ed. D'autres sont irréguliers comme « were ».

#### Acticité n°2 :

#### Modalités :

- Retour en plénière. Échange d'informations entre les apprenants qui ont travaillé sur la compréhension globale et ceux qui ont travaillé sur la compréhension détaillée.
- Dans un second temps on répondra ensemble aux questions qu'ils se posent sur les

temps. On déterminera ensemble grâce, entre autres, à la frise chronologique du groupe un, que le verbe + -ED est un temps du passé.

**PRL : PRETERIT + Prononciation du -ED**

Il s'utilise pour parler des actions situées dans le passé mais également terminées.

On distingue deux types de verbes pour la formation du prétérit :

**- 1) Les verbes réguliers :**

Le prétérit se forme, pour les verbes réguliers, en ajoutant la terminaison -ED à la base verbale, quel que soit la personne.

Ex: direct → He directed a film adaptation.

Remarque : On ajoute uniquement un -d- lorsque le verbe se termine par un -e- à l'infinitif.

Ex: release : It was released.

**- 2) Les verbes irréguliers.**

En ce qui concerne les verbes irréguliers, la formation du prétérit diffère en fonction du verbe.

Ex: write → She wrote novels.

- La terminaison du prétérit se prononce de trois manières différentes selon le son qui la précède. On fera une activité dans laquelle ils devront classer des verbes dans le tableau afin de pouvoir déduire la règle de prononciation.

/t/	/d/	/Id/
Après les sons : “f”, “k”, “p”, “s”, “th” “ch”	Le reste 😊	Après les sons “d” ou “t”

Réutilisation de la PRL afin de consolider leur compréhension du prétérit avec une correction orale afin de fixer une bonne prononciation de la terminaison -ED.

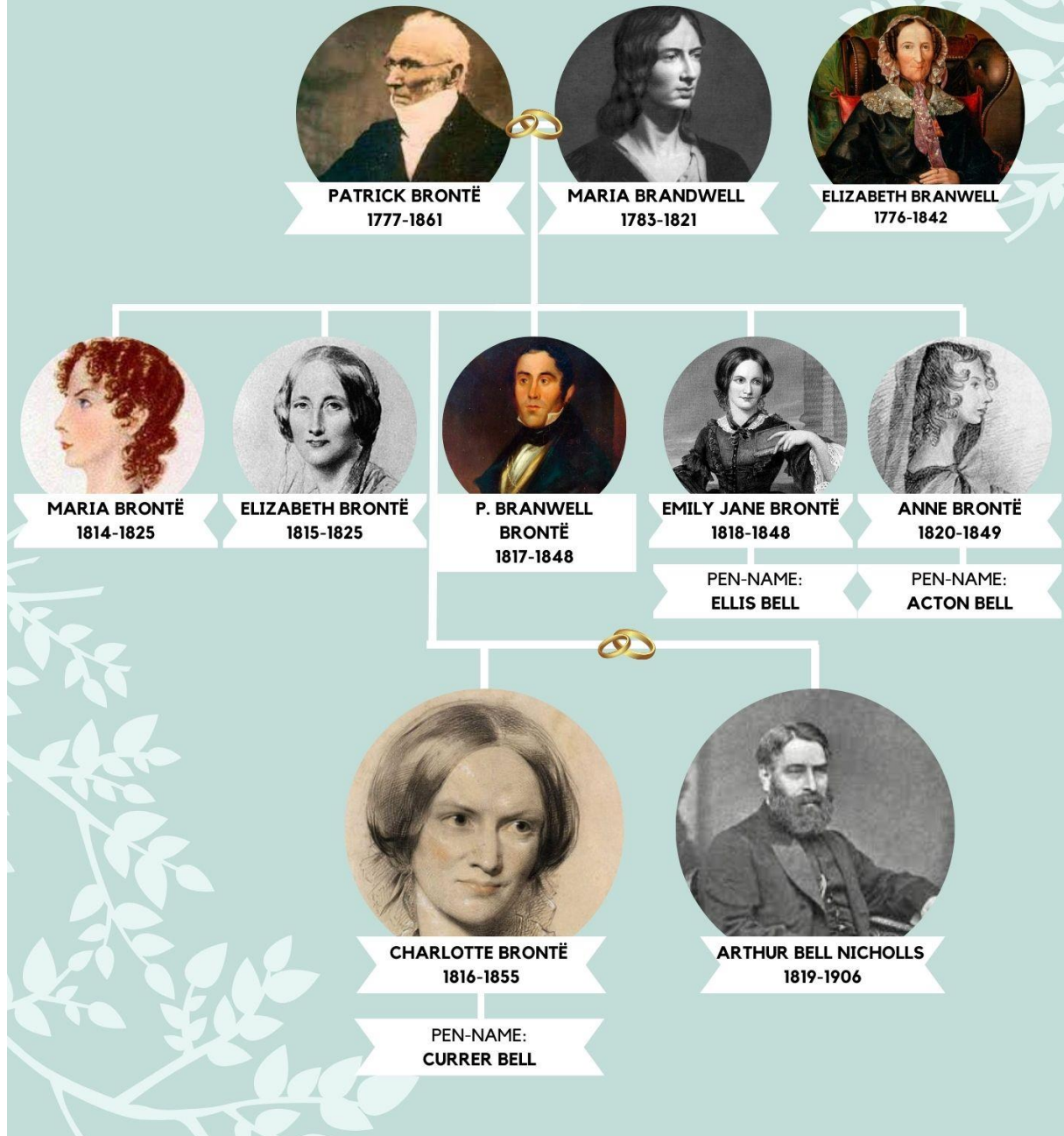
Consignes :

- Present Charlotte Brontë’s family using the Brontë Family Tree document:

Productions possibles :

- Emily Brontë was C. B’s sister, her pen name was Ellis Bell = she used the male pen name Ellis Bell.
- Anne Brontë was C. B’s sister, her pen name was Acton Bell = she used the pen name Acton Bell.
- The sisters kept their initial from their first names and used the same surname: Bell...

# The Brontë Family Tree



Trace Écrite (envisagée) :

*Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë

Charlotte Brontë **published** /'pʌblɪʃt/ the novel *Jane Eyre* in 1847. She **is** a **famous** /'feɪməs/ = worldwide /,wɜː'ld'waɪd/ known British **writer** /'raɪtəʳ/. **But = However**, to protect herself from the **patriarchal society** of the Victorian period that is the period during Queen Victoria's reign from 1837 to 1901, C. Brontë **pretended** /pri'tendɪd/ **to be = posed as** a man writer. Indeed, she **used** /'juːzɪd/ a **male pen name = penname**: Currer Bell

Her novels, **like = such as** *Jane Eyre* **are adapted** /ə'dæptɪd/ into other medium like theatre and cinema. **For example**, C.J. Fukunaga and R. Stevenson **are** two film directors who **adapted** *Jane Eyre* to cinema.

Travail à la maison :

- Apprentissage de la leçon, tant son contenu que sa prononciation ainsi que l'apprentissage du vocabulaire nouveau et du point de PRL : prétérit et la prononciation de la terminaison -ED.

### Séance 3 : Wall Quest n°2/2 – *Jane Eyre*

**L'intérêt pour la TF** : Confirmer ou infirmer les hypothèses émises en anticipation de séquence. Pour la TF il est important de comprendre qu'à l'origine *Jane Eyre* est un roman de Charlotte Brontë paru en 1847. Aussi, afin d'étendre les possibilités de réalisation de la TF il est également important de comprendre de quoi parle *Jane Eyre*, comprendre ses instants clefs ainsi que le rôle des personnages principaux.

[CE / POi]

Accueil

Appel

Rituel

Rebrassage et récapitulatif de la séance précédente

#### ANTICIPATION

- L'anticipation de séquence, cf. séance 1, nous sert d'entrée pour cette nouvelle séance : zoom sur le titre *Jane Eyre* de chacune des couvertures du roman afin que les apprenants ressortent les hypothèses formulées lors de la séance une. On tentera de leur faire formuler des hypothèses particulièrement axées sur le contenu du roman.

#### COMPRÉHENSION GLOBALE

Activité n°1 :

**A la fin de cette étape je veux que les apprenants aient compris que :** *Jane Eyre* est un roman écrit en 1847 par Charlotte Brontë. L'histoire tourne autour du personnage féminin principale de Jane, une enfant puis femme pleine d'esprit en avance sur son temps.

Consignes:

- Tick the right answer – *Jane Eyre* is a novel, a short story, a poem.
- Pick out the name that is repeated multiple times + look at the title of the novel: can you make a hypothesis as to whose story we can follow in *Jane Eyre*.
- Pick out the names of the characters (capital letters) and try to look before and after they appear to understand who they are.

Productions attendues :


- *Jane Eyre* is a novel, Charlotte Brontë wrote *J.E* in 1847.
- The title is = reads *Jane Eyre*, the name repeated multiple times is Jane. So = Therefore the novel follows the story of Jane Eyre from childhood to adulthood.
- Jane is the main character = the protagonist = the eponymous character. Jane's aunt is Mrs. Reed, she is an "abusive and cruel" aunt. Lowood is the name of Jane's grim school. Rochester is her lover, her husband but also Bertha's husband.



Stratégies Transférables :

- Rechercher les termes d'une question dans le texte ;
- Repérage des mots transparents (*cruel, abusive* etc);
- Regard la construction d'un mot pour le comprendre ex : childhood : child + suffixe hood.

Document :

<b>Summary = Abstract</b>	
	<p>“<i>Jane Eyre</i> is a novel written by Charlotte Brontë in 1847. The novel follows the story of Jane from childhood to adulthood. Jane is a simple girl who battles through life’s struggles = obstacles. Jane has many obstacles in her life - her cruel and abusive Aunt Reed, the grim = the terrible conditions at Lowood school, her love for Rochester and Rochester’s marriage to Bertha. However, Jane overcomes these obstacles through her determination, sharp wit = intelligence and courage. The novel ends with Jane married to Rochester with children of their own.”<sup>115</sup></p>

Activité n°2 :

**À la fin de cette étape je veux que les apprenants sachent :** replacer les personnages de *Jane Eyre*.

Afin de mieux répondre à leurs questionnements nous allons dans un premier temps étudier les personnages présents dans *Jane Eyre*.

Document :

- Bank of names: Jane Eyre, Edward Rochester, S<sup>t</sup> John Rivers, Mrs. Reed, Helen Burns, Mr. Brocklehurst, Bertha Mason, Adèle Varens.
- Descriptions:

**Jan Eyre:** Jane is the main character = protagonist = the eponymous character of *Jane Eyre*. She is a plain woman whom we follow from childhood to adulthood. In the novel she is first an ill-treated child, then a governess, a teacher and finally an independent woman who chooses to marry Rochester.

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<sup>115</sup> Résumé tiré du site de St Albans Secondary College : <https://libguides.stalbanssc.vic.edu.au/jane-eyre/summary>

**Edward Rochester:** Rochester is at first Jane's employer and the master of Thornfield House. Rochester is wealthy and passionate but sometimes a very gloomy and scary character. He ends up maimed, blind and after Bertha Mason's death he marries Jane Eyre with whom he has a child.

**S<sup>t</sup> John Rivers:** He is a religious man more precisely Jane's benefactor because he gives her food and shelter. He is a cold reserved man.

**Mrs. Reed:** She is Jane's cruel aunt she raises Jane as a child but then send her to the terrible Lowood School.

**Helen Burns:** She is Jane's best friend at the Lowood institute. She has beautiful curly hair, but the evil Mr. Brocklehurst forces her to cut it.

**Mr. Brocklehurst:** He is the evil principal of the Lowood School. He makes life miserable = a living hell for the Lowood Institute's pupils.

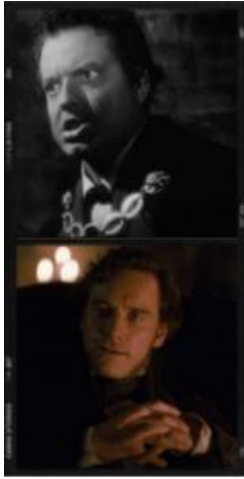
**Bertha Mason:** She is Rochester's hidden wife. Her marriage to Rochester made her insane and violent. Rochester hides = imprisoned her at Thornfield Hall. In the end, she burns down Thornfield Hall = her husband's house = Rochester's house and jumps into the flames to die.

**Adèle Varens:** She is Jane's pupil at Thornfield Hall = Jane is Adèle's governess. She is a vivid = energetic little girl who comes from a French mother and maybe Rochester.

Consignes :

- Read the character descriptions and try to guess who the characters in the pictures are.

Extrait du document qui se présenterait comme suit :



.....

## COMPRÉHENSION DÉTAILLÉE

Activité n°3 :

**A la fin de cette étape je veux que les apprenants connaissent :** les moments clefs de *Jane Eyre*.

Document :<sup>116</sup>

Consignes: - Try to complete Jane's journey from childhood to adulthood using the present tense (le present de narration).



<sup>116</sup> Document tiré du site de St Albans Secondary College : <https://libguides.stalbanssc.vic.edu.au/jane-eyre/summary>

Productions attendues :



Activité 4 :

**À la fin de cette étape je veux que les apprenants sachent :** s'exprimer sur le caractère des personnages principaux en se basant sur leur description, cf. Activité n°2, ainsi que sur ce qui s'est passé dans l'intrigue, cf. Activité n°3

Document :

Consignes :

- Each colour corresponds to a distinct part of the sentence: Subject + Verb + Complt. Also, using the colour of the words, the word bank at your disposal and what you know thanks to the previous activities: create 5 sentences with S + V + Complement correctly arranged / Ordered.

Productions attendues :

- Example : Rochester looks like a scary ghost;
- Jane is a spirited girl;
- Rochester is a gruesome man etc.

**Example:**

Rochester	looks like	a	scary	ghost
S	V	article	ADJ	Nom

- 1) .....
- 2) .....
- 3) .....
- 4) .....
- 5) .....

Trace Écrite (envisagée) : Cette séance n’aura pas de trace écrite conventionnelle mais sera constituée des documents remplis en classe.

Travail à la maison : Apprendre les étapes de l’histoire de *Jane Eyre* ainsi que le point de PRL sur l’ordre des mots dans une phrase en anglais.

**Étape 2: *The Gothic Plot in R. Stevenson and C.J. Fukunaga's Adaptations. Step 1: Build up your knowledge on the Gothic Plot***

**Séance 4:** *Build up your knowledge on the Gothic Plot.*

***L'intérêt pour la TF :***

S'assurer d'une bonne maîtrise des caractéristiques de l'intrigue gothique : le vocabulaire, les exemples par rapport à *Jane Eyre*.

[CE / CO]

**À la fin de cette séance je veux que les apprenants sachent :** déterminer ce qu'est l'intrigue du Gothique et reconnaître ses caractéristiques.

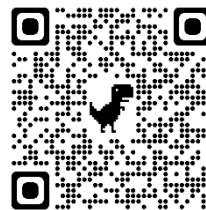
Modalité :

- Escape Game. En autonomie. Vérification par l'enseignant à chaque étape pour permettre à l'élève de passer à l'étape suivante. Chaque étape permet de révéler un indice (sous forme de mots ou sous forme de chiffres) qu'il faudra ensuite entrer dans le coffre-fort à la fin de l'escape game. La réussite de l'escape game, du groupe classe : c'est-à-dire que si les uns ont fini ils doivent tutorer ceux qui ont le plus de difficultés, alors le trailer de *Jane Eyre* créé par C.J. Fukunaga sera dévoilé. Ce dernier viendra confirmer visuellement ce qui aura été décrit jusqu'à présent.

## ANTICIPATION

Mission n°1:

- Phonetic Challenge
- Complete your tool box with words you can hear in the video « The Addams Family » and guess the secret message. (Some words are not in the video but thanks to the phonetic translation you can find them). [from 00 :02 :05 to 00 :04 :46].



## COMPRÉHENSION GLOBALE

Mission n°2:

- Read and Tick!
- Categories: Characters, Settings, Presence – Paranormal.

## COMPRÉHENSION DÉTAILLÉE

Mission n°3:

- You're up ! Describe the following film poster using the words provided to you in the right order.
- Apprentissage spiralaire : S+V+Cplt / !\ adj avant le nom

Mission n°4:

- What a mess... Sort all the film posters into the right category
- Conclusion de Mission n°4 vers lesquels on veut les amener : un film comme *JE* selon les caractéristiques mis en avant sur les affiches de film peut entrer dans plusieurs catégories. Donc, les genres et les intrigues sont fluides et un film ou livre peut correspondre à plusieurs genres différents comme celui de *Jane Eyre*.

Final Mission: Enter the code in the lock!

- The secret code is .....
- Débloquer la vidéo trailer afin qu'ils visualisent sous format vidéo ce dont on parle depuis le début, notamment au niveau des musiques difficilement transposables au format papier. Aussi, on leur demandera les points saillants de l'intrigue gothique qui se retrouvent dans ce trailer.

Document : Gothic Escape Game





Escape Game

# THE GOTHIC PLOT

5° / A2



Complete your tool box with words you can hear in the video "The Addams Family" and guess the secret message!  
[from 00 :02 :05 to 00 :04 :46].



## MISSION N°1: PHONETIC CHALLENGE!

⑤ /'kʊ:ki/	/'spu:ki/	/'kri:pi/
.....	.....	.....
① /mɪ'stɪəriəs/	③ /'deθ/ + /'ded 'hænd/	② /get 'ɑ:t/
.....	.....	.....
/'mɒnstə/	③ /tu: 'kwɑɪət/	/'hɪdiəs/
.....	.....	.....
① /'gəʊst/ = /'fæntəm/	④ /nəʊ wʌn hɪə/ = /ə'bəʊndənd/	
.....	.....	
	② /'ɒmɪnəs/ ≈ /'skeəri 'mju:zɪk/	④
	.....	

SECRET MESSAGE:

① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ① ② ③ ④ η





# MISSION N°2: READ AND TICK !



## CHARACTERS

The characters in *Jane Eyre* are part of the Gothic plot because they often appear frightening or menacing. For example, in the movie adaptation, Rochester is portrayed with a dark and ferocious gaze.



## SETTINGS

Jane's places of residence are known to be quite gloomy, often consisting of large mansions, dark schools, and isolated or even haunted locations. It is common to see fog, hear eerie music, or even see Jane in dark woods.



## PRESENCE - PARANORMAL



Sensing the Paranormal in *Jane Eyre*  
Jane experiences a sense of presences lurking around her, such as the feeling of a ghostly presence in the red room. Additionally, she hears voices that sound like Rochester's at other times.

### 1 In "Jane Eyre" the characters have Gothic features like:

- Rochester (1)
- Adèle (2)
- Mrs. Fairfax (3)

because of the character's:

-  knife (1)
-   gaze (2)
-  smile (3)

### 2 Jane lives in:

- a gloomy locations (1)
- a beautiful mansion (2)
- in the woods (3)

### 3 Jane can see and hear:

- ghosts = phantoms = presences (1)
- voices (2)
- music (3)
- Rochester (4)

### 4 Therefore we can say that "Jane Eyre" is a ..... story:

- Gothic (1)
- Scary (2)
- Funny (3)
- Spooky (4)

ADD THE NUMBERS TOGETHER !

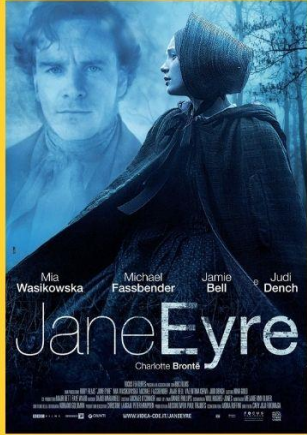
..... + ..... + ..... + ..... ➔ .....







# MISSION N°3: YOU'RE UP!



Mind your word orders:

Sujet + Verbe + Complément



ADJ avant le NOM

WHAT: This document / poster / is / "Jane Eyre" / a film / entitled / of / the movie

.....

ghost / like / looks / Rochester / a / and / Jane / anxious / looks = seems

.....

WHERE environment. / are / spooky / in / They // Indeed / are / dark / in / and they / a / foggy / forest.

.....

.....

WHO Rochester. / see / can / Jane / and / Eyre / I-We

.....

WHEN takes / night, / place / at / scene / The / is / it / gloomy.

.....

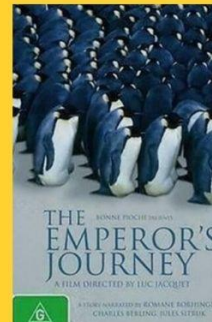
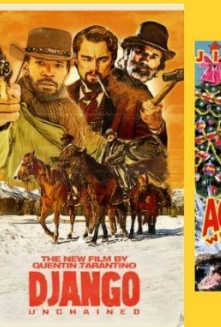
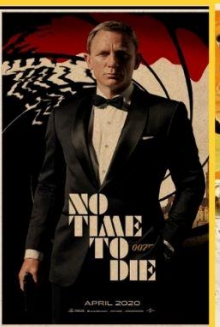
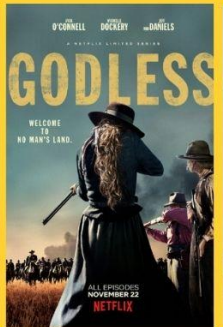
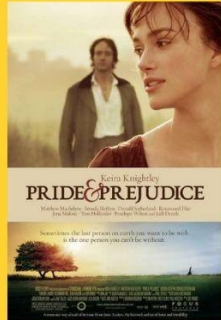
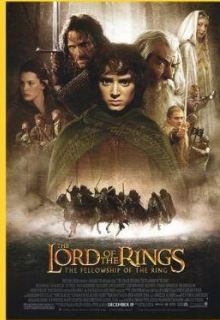
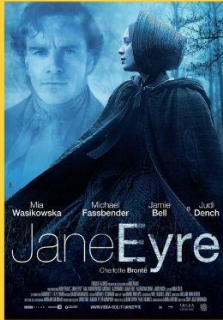
FIND A SYNONYM OF:

SPOOKY: .....

SCARED: .....



# MISSION N°4: WHAT A MESS ... SORT ALL THE FILM POSTERS INTO THE RIGHT CATEGORY.



# MISSION N°4: WHAT A MESS ... SORT ALL THE FILM POSTERS INTO THE RIGHT CATEGORY.

FANSTASTIC GOTHIC

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

ACTION ADVENTURE

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

COMEDY

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

WESTERN

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

ROMANCE

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTARY

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

"JANE EYRE" IS IN ONLY ONE CATEGORY:

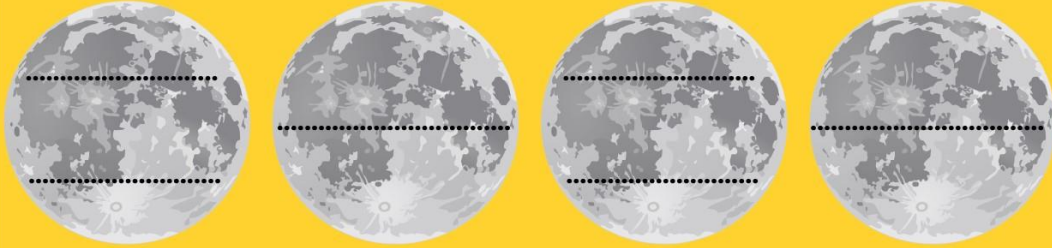
YES

NO





THE SECRET CODE IS ...



Enter the code in the lock!



Good Luck!



**Étape Finale: *Share your Knowledge during a Film Convention Focused on Adaptations of Jane Eyre.***

**Séance 6 et 7:**

*In the lead up to the upcoming film convention focused on adaptations of Jane Eyre, the organisers have requested that you design your own film poster, drawing inspiration from distinctive elements of the Gothic plot. 🧠 Prepare to showcase your creation at the film convention gathering! 🎬*



# Conclusion

This master dissertation has shed light on the many specificities of *Jane Eyre*, ensuring the prosperity of a staple novel of English literature. Indeed, Charlotte Brontë, in devising her novel, consciously infused it with critiques regarding the society she lived in. Through *Jane Eyre*, the 21<sup>st</sup> century readers have the opportunity to better gauge the limited opportunities women had compared to men at the time, yet Charlotte Brontë conveyed this message without necessarily portraying women as empty vessels, but rather empowering her female characters along the way, with the exception of Antoinette Bertha Mason even though it depends on the interpretation we have of her story.

One of the most striking subterfuges used by Charlotte Brontë is to employ literary plots to suit her characters' needs. While literary plots are typically highly codified, such as the Bildungsroman, originally exclusively fostering men's journeys, or the Romance plot, usually portraying a passive female character swayed by the love of an antagonistic male character, with whom she has to overcome obstacles until their foreseeable marriage, C. Brontë took these plots and added a twist. She used both the Bildungsroman plot and the Romance plot, yet the genius of her novel lies in applying them to Jane Eyre, a feisty and strong headed child with a strong sense of self, which came across as either revolutionary or was deemed an unforgivable fault, even a sin, by some conservative and sexist critics. Moreover, in addition to intertwining these two plots, Brontë altered them to mirror her vision of a woman's place, thereby paving the way for real-life women to follow in Jane's footsteps. She added another plot, that of Desire. The addition of this plot sparked both praise and criticism from her contemporaries. This plot ensures that Jane undergoes no mischaracterisation, emphasising her restlessness and desire for something more, which resonates with our present-day struggles. This restlessness serves as a broad enough concept to embolden minorities to apply it to themselves and use it to move forward beyond the restraints imposed upon them by others.

Therefore, the 1847 novel still echoes with our present day as it strips Victorian society of its secrets and tacit norms, allowing the eponymous character to forge a path of her own, in spite of her being viewed as inferior both socially and in terms of gender. C. Brontë's heroine conveys a streak of emancipation that has continuously inspired readers from its publication date to our own day and will assuredly continue to do so for generations to come.

The longevity of C. Brontë's masterpiece is evident in the numerous adaptations that

emerged shortly after the novel's publication in 1847. Indeed, as discussed in my master dissertation, every art form has had, and continues to have, its own adaptation of *Jane Eyre*. However, I chose to focus on film adaptations due to their accessibility and the broad audience they reach. Directors such as R. Stevenson and C. J. Fukunaga proved to be valuable subject of study, shedding light on the exercise of adaptation and the artistic liberties involved in translating a literary work into a visual one.

R. Stevenson's 1943 adaptation of *Jane Eyre*, while striving to maintain a strong resemblance to the source material, implementing Jane's voice over so as to transpose the novel's first-person narrator to cinema as well as showing alleged pages of the novel and respecting the chronology of Jane's journey it nonetheless diverges significantly from the novel's essence, its aura as defined by Walter Benjamin. Indeed, instead of conveying messages of emancipation concerning the minorities embodied by the women of the novel it rather did the opposite emphasising the importance of the place of women at home that is in the private sphere during the second World War period therefore taking women's fight for emancipation a century back. To that end, Stevenson chose to erase some female characters and replace them by male actors or else to sexualise and place the main character under the male gaze choosing Joan Fontain to carry the Hollywood physical archetype. Conversely, C. J. Fukunaga's 2011 adaptation, while taking liberties with the narrative structure, remains closer to the novel's aura, portraying an empowered Jane and challenging traditional gender roles associated to the figure of the saviour and the princess therefore inducing a change in Rochester's characterisation and thereby reinventing masculinity. C. J. Fukunaga takes tremendous liberties within the structure of his adaptation yet still vouches for women's emancipation and more largely minorities' emancipation even though we could have expected a better and deeper characterisation of Antoinette Bertha Mason from such a recent adaptation. Fukunaga does not break free from the image of the beast or of the creature, still conveying a stereotyped and schematic image of the "mad woman in the attic" as coined by Gilbert and Gubar. Despite telling the same story, each adaptation takes liberties that reveal the director's biases and reflect the societal norms of their respective times. Regarding the place of film directors on reality Benjamin Walter stated that:

The painter is to the cameraman what the magician is to the surgeon. In his work, the painter maintains a normal distance from the reality of his subject - on the other hand, the cameraman penetrates deeply into the fabric of the given reality. The images obtained by both are the result of completely different processes. The painter's image is total, while the cameraman's is made up of multiple fragments coordinated according to a new law.

Thus, of these two modes of representing reality - painting and film - the latter is

incomparably the more significant for today's human being, because it obtains from reality an aspect stripped of all devices - an aspect that the human being is entitled to expect from the work of art precisely thanks to the intensive penetration of reality by devices (Walter 20).<sup>117</sup>

Therefore, my master dissertation also serves to shed light on the liberties taken in the process of adaptations. Understanding these liberties is crucial for younger generation, as they are raised in a society dominated by visual representations. My master dissertation emphasises the importance of mastering the codes of visual adaptations and that from an early age to avoid falling for deceptive interpretations. Similarly, the development of a pedagogical sequence relies on similar principles as adaptation, i.e., it is rooted in precise objectives and designed for a specific audience. Indeed, it can be considered as adaptation. In my case, teaching secondary school pupils necessitates consideration of their young age. Hence, in my pedagogical sequence, I include playful activities to ensure they retain and comprehend the essentials of *Jane Eyre* while discarding extraneous details. Thus creating a course is as much an adaptation as the rest of it, which is why this master's dissertation is therefore an opportunity to ponder over the question of education through adaptation in all its forms.

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<sup>117</sup> *Le peintre est à l'opérateur ce qu'est le mage au chirurgien. Le peintre conserve dans son travail une distance normale vis-à-vis de la réalité de son sujet - par contre le cameraman pénètre profondément les tissus de la réalité donnée. Les images obtenues par l'un et par l'autre résultent de procès absolument différents. L'image du peintre est totale, celle du cameraman faite de fragments multiples coordonnés selon une loi nouvelle.*

*C'est ainsi que, de ces deux modes de représentation de la réalité - la peinture et le film - le dernier est pour l'homme actuel incomparablement le plus significatif, parce qu'il obtient de la réalité un aspect dépouillé de tout appareil - aspect que l'homme est en droit d'attendre de l'œuvre d'art précisément grâce à une pénétration intensive du réel par les appareils (Walter 20).*

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