

Introductions and Suggested Reading

These Introductions and Annotated reading lists are intended for teachers preparing to teach this text for the first time for Unit F661 in the OCR GCE AS Level in English Literature, though some materials may be shared directly with students. Most of the concerns highlighted address literary, biographical, historical or other contextual concerns, as indicated in the margin (AO4). Others point to critical approaches that may be juxtaposed with the candidate's own (AO3). Very occasionally some help is given exploring the text (AO2) though it is assumed that this work will be carried on in centres.

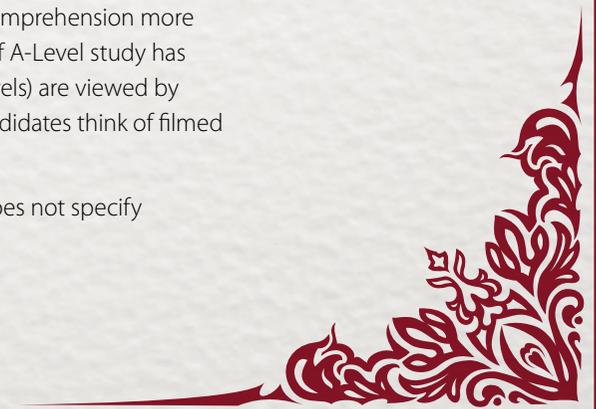
It is the intention that most of this material will be found directly relevant to AS study, teachers are reminded that Assessment Objectives do not directly establish the quality of an answer, but only assist to place it accurately within an assessment band. It follows that no marks are given directly for demonstration of AOs and that unless properly assimilated into the candidate's discussion, undigested lumps of contextual material may often inhibit rather than enhance an answer.

The brief suggestions for further reading will need to be filtered by teachers before they are presented to students; I would, however, recommend a general textbook on the novel, regardless of your choice of text. This is Jeremy Hawthorn, *Studying the Novel* (Arnold), which first appeared in 1985, and has been frequently updated and reprinted. Hawthorn's sense of the history of the novel is astute, his use of examples informative and unthreatening. He is impatient of jargon, and his definition of key-terms ('realism', 'Modernism') is accessible. Here is a sample of his method. Here he tests the value of successful viewpoint choice:

I have tried to find good audio-book readings of all the novels, convinced that they aid student comprehension more than is generally realised. I also hope teachers will find my views of film versions helpful. No area of A-Level study has improved as much as performance-criticism, where film and television versions (in the case of novels) are viewed by candidates as critical readings of the base-text. Obviously this process will be short-circuited if candidates think of filmed novels merely as pale substitutes for reading, or, worse, as substitutes.

Please note that where editions of texts are suggested, these are only recommendations. OCR does not specify editions of texts to be used, and F661 is a closed text examination.

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Brontë and Dickens

The constellation of novelists born between 1810 and 1819 is probably the brightest in the history of the English novel. Elizabeth Gaskell was born in 1810, Thackeray in 1811, Dickens in 1812, Trollope in 1814, Charlotte Brontë in 1816, Emily Brontë in 1818 and 'George Eliot' in 1819. When Charlotte was writing *Jane Eyre* in 1846-47, however, only the work of Dickens was likely to impact on a debut novelist. Charlotte, like Dickens, discovered that the early Victorian novel was a potent mechanism for social protest. She may have had in mind Dickens's vendetta with the Yorkshire Schoolmasters in *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838-39) when she wrote her Lowood sequence: one reviewer spoke of 'Dothegirls Hall'. Rev. Carus Wilson, proprietor of the school where two of Charlotte's sisters had died, was not unreasonably mortified to identify himself as the original of Mr Brocklehurst, and when Mrs Gaskell identified him unequivocally in her *Life* his family threatened litigation. Like Dickens, Charlotte was proving that occupying moral high ground could be controversial. Another Dickensian trait in *Jane Eyre* is surreal description, for instance Brocklehurst beetling over little Jane as a 'black pillar' or St John Rivers, later in the novel, as a 'cold cumbrous column.' But the most significant point of similarity is that in *Jane Eyre* Charlotte writes from the point-of-view of a sensitive, threatened child (the only time she does so in her four completed novels). This resembles the way *Oliver Twist* (1838) is concocted out of the title characters dreams and resentment; or *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1839-40) reflects the fears and sufferings of Little Nell.

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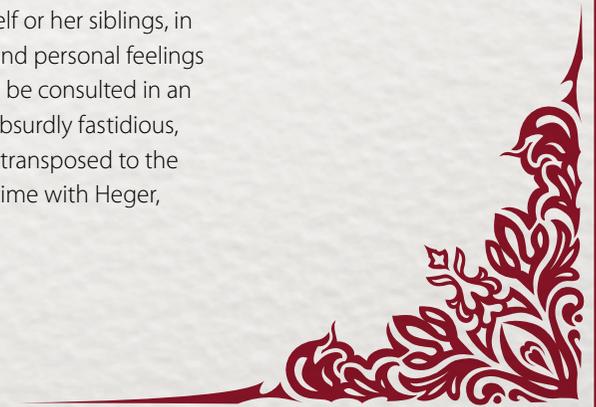


The Haworth Connection

Students of *Jane Eyre* who take a trip to Haworth will not find, like those studying *Wuthering Heights*, many of the original locations within a stone's throw of the Parsonage. But the visit will confirm how much the town is part of the industrial West Riding, and give a chance to absorb the 'Brontë legend' as consolidated by the tourist trade, complete with Japanese direction signs. Haworth Parsonage is now the second most visited literary landmark in Great Britain (after Shakespeare's birthplace). You can walk out to the 'poet's chair', two miles along the Pennine Way at Brontë Falls, where Charlotte sat and declaimed. About ten miles from Haworth, near the Lancashire Border, are the ruins of Wycoller Hall, traditionally the original of Ferndean Manor, Rochester's retreat after Thornfield is burnt at the end of the novel.

But the most significant events in Charlotte's story took place far from Haworth. In 1842 (when Charlotte was nearly twenty-six) both she and Emily went to the Pensionnat Heger in Brussels, Belgium, to improve their knowledge of French and German. Their master was a temperamental, Napoleonic little man, of thirty-two, Constantin George Romain Heger, who was the husband of the school's proprietor. Heger got close to all his wife's most intelligent pupils, but not close enough for Charlotte, who was soon in love with him. It proved the most important relationship of Charlotte's life, more poignant and productive for her literature because it remained unrequited. All of Charlotte's novels include 'master-pupil scenes', where the heroine exposes herself to a mixture of discerning and sometimes manipulative criticism from her 'master'. As payback the girl often triumphs unexpectedly, or at least occupies the moral high ground, in the most significant encounters. As Rochester argues, 'You master me because you seem to submit.' This and many of Rochester's catechisms of Jane seem like sublimations of Charlotte's dealings with Constantin Heger, whom she called 'the only master I have ever had.' Instead of writing the wish-fulfilment fantasies of Angria for herself or her siblings, in Belgium Charlotte found herself writing essays for her 'master', and honing both her literary skills and personal feelings by means of what she considered his expert feedback. Much of this written work survives and can be consulted in an excellent modern edition by Sue Lonoff (1996). Some of Heger's criticisms, like Rochester's, seem absurdly fastidious, as if some other process than the purely educational is unfolding – as, when the whole episode is transposed to the Romantic novel, *Jane Eyre*, it certainly is. 'It felt very strange to submit to authority,' she said of her time with Heger, '... but I like that state of things.'

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Suggestions for Biographical Reading:

Elizabeth Gaskell, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857), ed. Angus Easson, Oxford World's Classics.
[The book that kicked off the Brontë legend: an impossibly sanitized and saintly Charlotte emerges. But Gaskell interviewed important players, for instance Heger.]

Juliet Barker, *The Brontës* (1994; rev 2010). [A monumental composite biography, good to dip into. Very good on Haworth and Yorkshire, as befits a former curator of the Parsonage Museum.]

Lucasta Miller, *The Brontë Myth* (2000). One of the first to trace the development of the Brontë legend through the work of film-makers, popular journalists, tea-shop owners and Kate Bush.

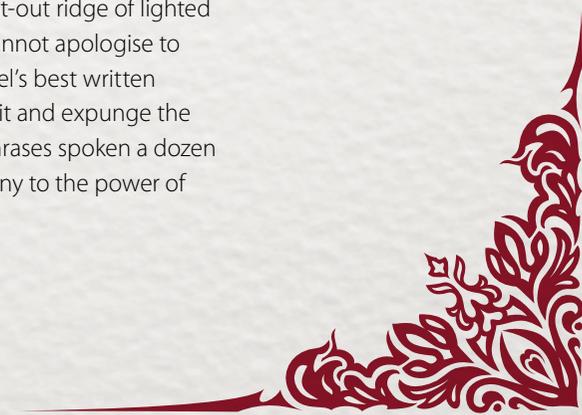


'A Pervading Tone of Ungodly Discontent.'

Early reviewers regularly commented on the 'dissident' tone of *Jane Eyre*, sometimes viewing it as dangerously radical. Most celebrated of these is Elizabeth Rigby in the Tory *Quarterly Review* (1848), who had the good fortune to review simultaneously two of the century's finest novels, *Vanity Fair* and *Jane Eyre*, but did not let this dilute a natural acidity of tone. She argues that 'Jane Eyre is throughout the personification of an unregenerate and undisciplined spirit' and then goes on to lambast the book as a muster of all the radicalisms of the age:

There is throughout it a murmuring against the comforts of the rich and against the privations of the poor, which, as far as each individual is concerned, is a murmuring against God's appointment—there is a proud and perpetual assertion of the rights of man, for which we find no authority either in God's word or in God's providence—there is that pervading tone of ungodly discontent which is at once the most prominent and most subtle evil which the law and the pulpit, which all civilized society in fact has at the present day to contend with. We do not hesitate to say that the tone of mind and thought which has overthrown authority and violated every code human and divine abroad, and fostered Chartism and rebellion at home, is the same which has also written Jane Eyre.

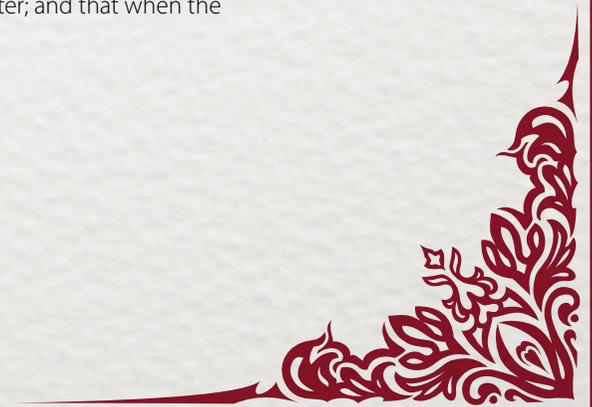
All these things which rankle deeply with Rigby are precisely the qualities in the book and its author that have endeared it to generations of readers. The 1944 film claims it is the 'most read' of all 'classic novels.' Jane's ten-year-old attack on Aunt Reed (a thirty-seven year old woman) is terrible in its audacity and rectitude; yet it is one of the highlights of the book for many readers, on a level with Oliver asking for more, or Maggie Tulliver in *The Mill on the Floss* cutting her hair to spite her stuffy relatives. After the encounter, Jane views her still smoking imagination as a burnt-out ridge of lighted heath, which Gilbert and Gubar suggest is prophetic of 'the flames consuming Thornfield.' Jane cannot apologise to Aunt Reed, and never does, returning instead to Gateshead and her deathbed and one of the novel's best written scenes. The result is a stand-off between the two ladies: there is no attempt on Jane's part to revisit and expunge the tirade in the breakfast-room, but there is by Aunt Reed, who remembers, in half-delirium, exact phrases spoken a dozen years before, and whose mind has been impressed with them indelibly. There is no better testimony to the power of Jane's radical energy.



Jane Eyre and Feminist Criticism

Charlotte famously wrote to the Poet Laureate in 1836, aged 20, asking his opinion of her poems. Robert Southey was an intensely domestic man, and by this date a very conservative one, whose literary labour had supported the womenfolk of many close friends, particularly the wife of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. His reply took no prisoners. He cautioned Charlotte against 'day-dreaming' and argued that 'Literature cannot be the business of a woman's life; and it ought not to be.' Possibly Southey's put-down rankled sufficiently deeply with Charlotte to lead her to choose an antiseptic male pseudonym ('Currer Bell') in 1846; it may even have imparted an unexpectedly 'masculine' thrust to her prose. George Henry Lewes found in *Jane Eyre* a 'vigour' amounting to 'coarseness – and is certainly the very antipode to "lady like"'. Among other passages he was possibly thinking of the feminist outburst when Jane leaves Lowood for Thornfield (ch. 12): 'women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties, and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do.' The most obvious episodes where Jane's manly energies are needed to compete with the 'masculine' world are those involving evangelical clergymen: first Brocklehurst, a snobby humbug who achieves most of his bullying kudos by operating in a girls' school; and then, at the end of the book, St John Rivers, whose iron will threatens both Jane's selfhood and her sanity. Feminist criticism might also note Aunt Reed's automatic preference for her worthless son over her not very worthy daughters; girl-on-girl oppression by the teachers in institutionalised Lowood, and by everyone on Helen; and the vanity luxurious upbringing has imposed on Adele Varens. Feminist critics might also show how the two most prophetic voices in the novel, Helen Burns and Jane Eyre, are female; that Jane has no truck with Rochester's fetishistic masculine sexuality when he wants to dress her up in high fashion; that Jane wins the pocket-money dispute, and most other domestic disputes, against the ingenuity of her more worldly master; and that when the latter wishes to read her fortune he chooses to empower himself by means of a female disguise.

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Fire in the Attic

The most radical and ingenious critical discussion of the novel is to be found in Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) which takes its title from (in these critics' view) the true 'heroine' of the novel, Bertha Mason. Though feisty in her way Jane can't express her feminism without offending the sensibilities of a mid-Victorian readership; so her more subversive attributes are appropriated by Bertha Mason, who embodies and often enacts Jane's deepest desires, including setting fire to Rochester in his bed and rending the wedding veil (representing the institution of marriage). Thus subversion is contained in the closets and embrasures of Thornfield, and kept away from impressionable readers; but it remains available, Gilbert and Gubar argue, to the feminist reader. When she is with St John, Jane complains she is 'forced to keep the fire of [her] nature continually low.' Gilbert and Gubar's reading fans that flame into an importunate blaze.

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The Brontës and Theology

'The Brontë sisters grew up on the bible, not the classics,' Sue Lonoff reminds us. They were speculative Broad Church Protestants, to whom no Anglican doctrine was immutable, and they had been introduced early by their father, a notable essayist, to theological controversy. The family's favourite doctrine was Universal Salvation, the belief that God does not intend to damn even the worst of his creatures perpetually (or perhaps at all) and evidence of this doctrine is plentiful in *Jane Eyre*. The leading proponent is Helen Burns, traditionally supposed a portrait of the oldest Brontë sister Maria, and her speeches on this subject are so eloquent and well-rehearsed they suggest to some readers that Charlotte might have been recalling some of Maria's actual words: 'I hold another creed; which no one ever taught me, and which I seldom mention; but in which I delight, and to which I cling: for it extends hope to all: it makes Eternity a rest – a mighty home, not a terror and an abyss.' Belief in Universal Salvation also crops up in Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, when the Bible is cited to prove that even the appalling Henry Huntingdon will be 'a brand plucked from the burning'; in the compassion expressed in *Wuthering Heights* towards the ruinous Hindley Earnshaw and the craven Linton Heathcliff; and frequently in Emily Brontë's poems:

*Do I despise the timid deer,
Because his limbs are fleet with fear?
Or, would I mock the wolf's death-howl,
Because his form is gaunt and foul?
Or, hear with joy the leveret's cry,
Because it cannot bravely die?*

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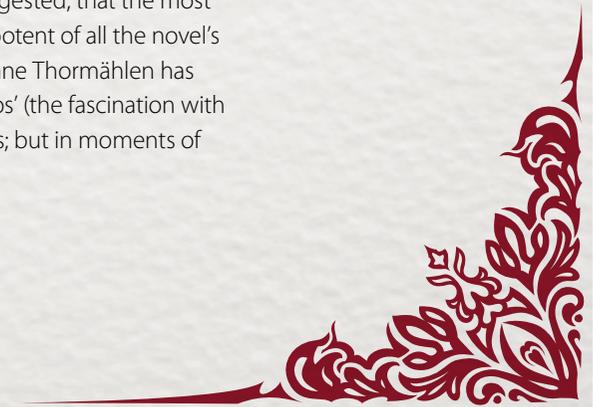
Jane Eyre and Religion

Universal Salvation is not the only theological doctrine to preoccupy Brontë characters. The best book on the subject is Marianne Thormählen's *The Brontës and Religion* (1999), in which she argues, 'The Christian life is a foreign country to most people today, and I believe it serves some purpose to be reminded that to the Brontës it was home.' 'Elle [Charlotte] était nourie de la bible,' [The bible was her food] Heger told Mrs Gaskell. In the course of *Jane Eyre*, Jane makes a series of tough moral choices, none more serious than to leave Rochester when she discovers he is already married, 'as painful as plucking a barbed arrow-head out of her breast' (ch. 27). But in no case is the decision arrived at by merely consulting her wishes, her conscience, or the needs of women in early Victorian society. In every case, as a good enlightened Puritan girl should, she consults the wishes of God: 'I will keep the law given by God; sanctioned by man' (ch. 27). In an 1842 *devoir* for M. Heger, 'The Immensity of God', Charlotte confesses herself awestruck before the universe. Similarly in 'destitution' at Whitcross, having abandoned all her worldly hopes and needs, Jane looks up at the night sky, and is overcome with the 'remembrance of God':

We know that God is everywhere; but certainly we feel his presence most when His works are on the grandest scale spread out before us: but it is in the unclouded night-sky, where His worlds wheel their silent course, that we read clearest His infinitude, His omnipotence, His omnipresence (ch. 28).

Casting up destitute on the Derbyshire moor is partly her own fault (she leaves Thornfield in a hurry, without sufficient money, and leaves her belongings in the coach). But it allows Brontë a chance to give her 'time in the wilderness' like Jesus before His ministry, consulting her faith and restoring her soul. It confirms, as Helen Burns suggested, that the most effective resistance is often to be found in passive suffering. And it allows St John Rivers, the most potent of all the novel's spiritual guides, to rescue her from her City of Destruction and give her a second chance. As Marianne Thormählen has argued, modern literary criticism displays an 'intense preoccupation with secular power relationships' (the fascination with the gendered tug-of-war in 'Reader, I married him') confirms this. *Jane Eyre* has such preoccupations; but in moments of choice or crisis cosmic concerns override them.

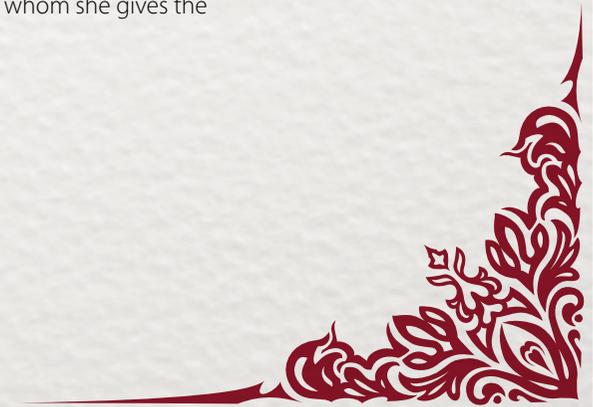
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Two Saints

'Reader, I married him' are not the last words of *Jane Eyre*; these are taken from the end of the Book of Revelation, the last book of the Bible. They do not concern Jane and Rochester but the third most important figure in the novel, St John Rivers, and, even then, not his earthly future, but eternal destiny: 'Amen, even so come, Lord Jesus!' (ch. 38). St John's son 'hastens to its setting'; but he anticipates his 'sure reward, his incorruptible crown.' As Marianne Thormählen has argued, any 'attempt to recast *Jane Eyre* as a tale in which the death of a person's body is the end of him or her would entail far-reaching changes.' Without immortality Helen Burns's passive non-resistance seems crazily self-effacing and her early death cruelly pointless; with it she becomes a saintly exemplar and her 'last conscious hour is the most decisive moment in the religious education of Jane Eyre.' Without immortality St John exposes himself to Indian disease and as masochist or egoist; in the context of a life to come he has enlisted like the angels in the army of Christ. Neither Helen nor St John would have been easy role models in the 1840s; now many readers prefer to subordinate them entirely to the story of Mr Rochester and conveniently neglect them. But as Elisabeth Jay points out in *The Religion of the Heart* (1979), Jane is subject to an ascetic Christian model both at the beginning and again at the end of the novel, and in neither case does she feel fully able to embrace their example and live life by their creed. Jane did not invoke Helen's pacifism in her dealings with Aunt Reed and does not mean to in any future dealings with the brutal Miss Scatcherd. She meant and means to 'hit back, very hard.' Yet she admires Helen's vision, grasps that it represents in some way a marvellous sublimation of Christ's limitless generosity ('Today you shall be with me in paradise') as well as a chance to dish the bigots who use the doctrine of eternal punishment as a means to political ends. She prefers wounded, fallible Rochester, making her first serious steps as a Christian. It is Rochester she marries. But it is Rivers to whom she gives the last words of her life's story.

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Jane Eyre as a Colonial Novel

The Colonial implications of *Jane Eyre* are both fascinating and disturbing. The Brontës had no close West Indian connections, so the Jamaican origins and upbringing of Bertha Mason, and Rochester's time in the plantocracy, are presumably intended as plot-conveniences. Yet in order to achieve the desired plot-outcomes, Brontë is forced into writing passages that look disconcerting when scrutinised by a post-colonial critic. For instance the white Creole West Indians presented in the book are all humanly and morally flawed. Set by their English equivalents, they seem almost degenerate. Richard Mason is cowardly and irresponsible, his sister Bertha certifiably insane. They seem to be 'Quadroon' stock, bearing some 'tainted' African blood, perhaps leading to Bertha's 'intemperate and unchaste' character and lurid sexuality: 'no professed harlot ever had a fouler vocabulary than she.' In a sticky Jamaican night buzzing with mosquitoes and blazing with primary colours, Rochester shrugs off thoughts of suicide, and tunes into a message sent directly from Europe, which he would be forgiven for assuming was anything other than the word of God: 'The sweet wind from Europe was still whispering in the refreshed leaves, and the Atlantic was thundering in glorious liberty' (ch. 27). The moralised abstraction 'Hope', again speaking with a strong English accent, tells him to 'Go, and live again in Europe'; he does, and meets Jane. Meanwhile Jane's rich Uncle Eyre is amassing her a sizeable West Indian fortune. Thus the novel moralises the Jamaican landscape into a degenerate swamp and breeder of madness, but also a breeding-ground for gold, meanwhile gesturing at Europe as a place of pure, temperate waters.



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Wide Sargasso Sea

None of these sequences is very edifying to a West Indian reader. One West Indian reader was so incensed (or intrigued) by them that she wrote the most significant of all the sequels the novel has generated, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966). Like all Rhys's novels this one is very short, and like all of them, very leanly and sharply written, in prose much tougher and brisker than Charlotte's 'supercharged' fare. The work of a white woman from Dominica, who spent most of her life in Europe, it takes colonial dislocation as a metaphor for the estrangement, oppression and entropy of modern life. The Sargasso Sea of the title is a breeding-ground for eels in mid-Atlantic, between Old World and New. It seems to colour all the heroine's perceptions with a sort of green submarine light, making the efforts of her husband, Edward Rochester, to make sense of the universe for her, supremely pointless. For she, of course, is the much derided moral degenerate of Charlotte's novel, Bertha Mason, only now fortified with piquant and dramatic inner monologues, and trying hard to recover her original status and identity as Antoinette Cosway, for Rochester and her family have imposed upon her the name by which she is known in the Brontë novel, and it is not her own. Jane herself makes only a fleeting appearance in Rhys's book, as a sort of Puritanical grey ghost glimpsed in a Thornfield corridor, and Bertha has long despaired of Rochester as a craven, colonial exploiter afraid of the Caribbean sexuality she so iridescently embodies. The novel's crisis, like that of *Jane Eyre*, comes when Antoinette/Bertha burns down Thornfield; but, far from an opportunity for the hero's moral regeneration, as in Brontë, in Rhys the heroine lights a lamp to lesson ages and achieves what Woolf would call 'a moment of being'. Her suicide is as triumphal and retributive as that in Kate Chopin's novel *The Awakening*. Indeed Antoinette fulfils almost exactly the role of Jane's feminist *alter-ego* as posited by Gilbert and Gubar in *The Madwoman in the Attic*.



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Post-Colonial Readings of *Jane Eyre*

One of the effects of *Wide Sargasso Sea* is to elevate Bertha, probably intended by Brontë as little more than a Gothic device, into arguably the most significant personage in the novel, and to turn *Jane Eyre*, if not into a novel of Imperial oppression, then into one that has a post-imperial case to answer. Feminist criticism tends to posit Jane as the victim of patriarchy and masculine institution; but post-colonial critics, who note that most of the wealth that ever came out of the Caribbean was the product of slave-labour, take a very different view. The novel is set after the 1807 suppression of the Slave Trade, but probably before the emancipation of all slaves in the British Empire in 1833. This has led Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak to claim that Black Women of the British West Indies become impoverished at Jane's expense. For Post Colonial critics *Jane Eyre* is one of those fundamentally conservative works of art that looks at first glance more radical than it is, much as Stephen Greenblatt finds Early Modern drama introducing subversive elements into the mix only to 'restrain' or 'contain' them. This is perhaps unsurprising in a novel that foregrounds an appealing romantic fantasy, dashes it to pieces, then allows it to culminate in an abundance of spiritual and temporal blessings, Jane achieving a family, an estate, and finally her coveted husband. That 'achievement' necessarily deprives Bertha of her life and status while simultaneously exploiting the 'Black Women of the British West Indies'. They are so marginal to the book's 'imperial' concerns they do not actually feature in it.

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Female Gothic

The Gothic novel was a major formative influence on the young Brontës. It leaves its mark on *Jane Eyre* in Thornfield, not a particularly lowering Gothic pile, but containing an ominous dark passage, 'like a corridor in some Bluebeard's castle.' There is talk of ghosts, more purposeful talk of the 'Gytrash', a tutelary spirit of hidden byways, all this legendary talk and hearsay heightening the atmosphere of suspense until Brontë is ready to prise out the truth. As with most Gothic puzzles the fact is no easier to live with than the Romantic fiction had been. What is concealed in the Bluebeard's castle of Thornfield is Rochester's desolate past and dubious future intentions. As in the work of Ann Radcliffe, most obviously *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), the house embodies the personality of its owner, as Udolpho on its crag expresses Montoni's brooding, threatening personality. Once Radcliffe has exposed the Gothic mechanism as symbolic cover for her psychological intentions, she explains away every unexplained supernatural occurrence. Brontë does the same. In Radcliffe this was partly to repair the sensibilities of impressionable female readers; with Brontë it springs from a natural rebound of scepticism and denial. The one apparently supernatural event in the novel, Rochester calling Jane's name across approximately one hundred miles of open space just as she is about to assent to Rivers's proposal of marriage, is less an exception to the rational explanation principle in 'Radcliffe Gothic' than might at first appear. John Sutherland confronted the problem in *Is Heathcliff a Murderer?* (OUP, 1996) and discovered that Brontë attended a number of lectures given by practitioners of the new 'science' of mesmerism and read a number of books on the subject. When Rochester stares at the moon, and Jane into a candle flame, they independently place themselves into mesmeric trances, in which they are capable of telepathic communication. Brontë did not believe she was regressing into the fantastic at this moment in the novel; rather she thought she was at the cutting edge of Victorian psychology.

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The 'Children' of *Jane Eyre*

Jane Eyre has generated a number of important literary offspring. As early as 1853 Elizabeth Barrett Browning borrowed aspects of the novel's plot for the most successful of all Victorian verse-novels, *Aurora Leigh*. The American Feminist, Charlotte Perkins Gilman may have been recalling Bertha's predicament when she wrote her hallucinatory novella *The Yellow Wallpaper*, in which a woman undergoing 'treatment' for post-natal depression believes herself imprisoned, a veritable 'madwoman in the attic'. Most significant of all is *Rebecca* (1938), the twentieth century's favourite Romantic-Gothic novel, in which the mousy unnamed heroine slowly uncovers the depravity of her husband's first wife. Just as dream-like as *Jane Eyre*, and just as determined to find dreams powerful factors of reality, the novel ends as Manderley joins Thornfield in a sheet of passionate flame.

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Film, Television, Audiobook

Jane Eyre may be one of the most frequently reinterpreted popular classics on both big and small screen. The choice exhibit is still Robert Stevenson's 1944 version starring Orson Welles and Joan Fontaine (who had appeared in the 'Jane Eyre' role in Hitchcock's *Rebecca* (1941)). The Thornfield interiors are so elaborate and contorted they sometimes evoke Piranesi. 'Gothic' is an understatement for the prevailing style, with lighting recalling German expressionism in the 1920s. St John Rivers is a casualty of the script, becoming a kindly doctor, but Elizabeth Taylor, then a child-star, steals the first half of the film as Helen Burns. There have been numerous other versions, of which the most important are the sterling 1973 BBC version, directed by Joan Craft and starring Sorcha Cusack and Michael Jayston (the latter self-mocking and sometimes very funny); the fondly remembered BBC 1983 adaptation starring a pre-Bond Timothy Dalton as Rochester; the mildly lurid 1996 film version directed by Franco Zeffirelli and starring William Hurt and Charlotte Gainsbourg; a 1997 television version produced by the A&E Network with a rather spooky Ciaran Hinds as Mr. Rochester and Samantha Morton as Jane; and the very creditable 2006 BBC adaptation starring Toby Stephens as a quizzical Mr. Rochester, and Ruth Wilson as a very convincing Jane. 2011 will see another film version, directed by Cary Fukunaga and starring Mia Wasikowska and Michael Fassbender.

Amusement may be had for half a lesson-or-so with *Devotion* (1946), one of the great good-bad films and the first attempt at a Brontë biopic. Thackeray is played by larger-than-life Sydney Greenstreet, while Olivia de Havilland plays Charlotte in rather combative mood.

A 1990s unabridged reading by Juliet Stevenson is available on the Cover to Cover label.

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