THE ETERNAL EYRE: THE FICTIONAL WORLD AND THE WORLD OF FICTION IN JANE EYRE AND ITS ADAPTATIONS

Thesis submitted to the University of Calicut
for the award of the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in English

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DECLARATION

I, Smrithi M. Venugopal, hereby declare that the thesis entitled "**The Eternal Eyre: The Fictional World and the World of Fiction in Jane Eyre and its Adaptations**" which is submitted to the University of Calicut, for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, is a a bona fide record of research carried out by me and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship, or any other similar title, or recognition.

Place: Dwaggiri
Date: 18.12.2023

Smrithi

Smrithi M Venugopal

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled, "**The Eternal Eyre: The Fictional World and the World of Fiction in Jane Eyre and its Adaptations**" submitted to the University of Calicut, for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, is a record of bona fide research carried out by **Ms. Smrithi M. Venugopal**, under my supervision and guidance. No part of this thesis has been submitted earlier for the award of any degree, diploma, title, or recognition.

Place: Devagiri,

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Smrithi M. Venugopal

ABSTRACT

Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* (1847) continues to find appreciative audience throughout every decade. *Jane Eyre* has inspired numerous prequels, sequels, revisions, re-tellings, adaptations, and spin offs. The creation and acceptability of other art forms and merchandising based on the novel underlines its undiminished popularity. The thesis will reflect on the influence and significance of *Jane Eyre* and its adaptations in academic circles and contemporary culture. It analyses the fictional worlds in select fiction and film adaptations of *Jane Eyre* in the light of the existing post-colonial and feminist scholarship on *Jane Eyre*, in order to expand the existing scholarship on its adaptations. It looks for recurring trends centred on race and gender, the generic fluidity of the novel that facilitates the creation of newer adaptations in varying genres and natures, the pattern of adaptation of the novel into visual media, and the prominence of *Jane Eyre* in contemporary popular culture. Nineteen novels and ten films based on the novel are selected for the study. The thesis discusses the numerous genre transformations the novel has undergone and offers insights into alternate perspectives on Brontë's novel based on its selected adaptations. The actual world of text production and the possible worlds manifested by the different authors shall serve to be the focus of analysis. With its engagement on the film adaptations, the thesis is designed to provide a context for debates centered on the pleasures of popular fiction in all their ambivalence, tension, and contradiction. Drawing on contemporary critical theory, it will investigate production contexts, genres in their historical diversity and fluid boundaries, texts and the formation of identities or subjectivities, readerships and the historical conditions which shape the production and reproduction of re-readings. The study engages the novel's generic transformations, shifts in perspectives, visual media adaptations, and its significance popular culture to foreground its ever-increasing popularity and longevity.

Key words: Jane Eyre, Adaptations, Genre, Perspectives, Popular Culture

സംഗ്രഹം

ഷാർലറ്റ് ബ്രോണ്ടിയുടെ ജെയ്ൻ ഐർ (1847) എല്ലാ ദശാബ്ദങ്ങളിലും അഭിനന്ദനാർഹമായ പ്രേക്ഷകരെ കണ്ടെത്തുന്നത് തുടരുന്നു. ജെയ്ൻ ഐർ നിരവധി പ്രീകൽപലുകൾ, തുടർച്ചകൾ, പുനരവലോകനങ്ങൾ, റീ-ടെല്ലിംഗുകൾ, അഡാപ്റ്റേഷനുകൾ, സ്പിൻ ഓഫുകൾ എന്നിവയ്ക്ക് പ്രചോദനം നൽകിയിട്ടുണ്ട്. നോവലിനെ അടിസ്ഥാനമാക്കിയുള്ള മറ്റ് കലാരൂപങ്ങളുടെയും കച്ചവടചരക്കുകളുടെയും സൃഷ്ടിയും സ്വീകാര്യതയും അതിന്റെ കുറയാത്ത ജനപ്രീതിക്ക് അടിവരയിടുന്നു. ജെയ്ൻ ഐറിന്റെ സ്വാധീനവും പ്രാധാന്യവും അക്കാദമിക് സർക്കിളുകളിലും സമകാലിക സംസ്കാരത്തിലും അതിന്റെ അനുരൂപീകരണങ്ങളെക്കുറിച്ചും പ്രബന്ധം പ്രതിഫലിപ്പിക്കും. ജെയ്ൻ ഐറിന്റെ നിലവിലുള്ള പോസ്റ്റ്-കൊളോണിയൽ, ഫെമിനിസ്റ്റ് സ്കോളർഷിപ്പിന്റെ വെളിച്ചത്തിൽ, അതിന്റെ അഡാപ്റ്റേഷനുകളിൽ നിലവിലുള്ള സ്കോളർഷിപ്പ് വിപുലീകരിക്കുന്നതിനായി, തിരഞ്ഞെടുത്ത ഫിക്ഷനിലും ചലച്ചിത്രാവിഷ്കാരങ്ങളിലും സാങ്കൽപ്പിക ലോകങ്ങളെ പ്രബന്ധം വിശകലനം ചെയ്യുന്നു. വംശത്തെയും ലിംഗഭേദത്തെയും കേന്ദ്രീകരിച്ചുള്ള ആവർത്തിച്ചുള്ള പ്രവണതകൾ, വ്യത്യസ്ത വിഭാഗങ്ങളിലും സ്വഭാവങ്ങളിലും പുതിയ അഡാപ്റ്റേഷനുകൾ സൃഷ്ടിക്കാൻ സഹായിക്കുന്ന നോവലിന്റെ പൊതുവായ ദ്രവ്യത, ദൃശ്യമാധ്യമങ്ങളിലേക്കുള്ള നോവലിന്റെ അനുരൂപീകരണ രീതി, സമകാലിക ജനപ്രിയതയിൽ ജെയ്ൻ ഐറിന്റെ പ്രാധാന്യം എന്നിവ പ്രബന്ധം വിശകലനം ചെയ്യുന്നു. ബ്രോണ്ടിയുടെ നോവലിനെ ആസ്പദമാക്കിയ പത്തൊൻപത് നോവലുകളും പത്ത് സിനിമകളുമാണ് പഠനത്തിനായി തിരഞ്ഞെടുത്തിരിക്കുന്നത്. നോവൽ അനുഭവിച്ച നിരവധി തരം പരിവർത്തനങ്ങളെ പ്രബന്ധം ചർച്ച ചെയ്യുകയും തിരഞ്ഞെടുത്ത അഡാപ്റ്റേഷനുകളെ അടിസ്ഥാനമാക്കി ബ്രോണ്ടിയുടെ നോവലിനെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള ഇതര വീക്ഷണങ്ങളെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള ഉൾക്കാഴ്ചകൾ നൽകുകയും ചെയ്യുന്നു. വാചക നിർമ്മാണത്തിന്റെ യഥാർത്ഥ ലോകവും വ്യത്യസ്ത രചയിതാക്കൾ പ്രകടിപ്പിക്കുന്ന സാധ്യമായ ലോകങ്ങളും വിശകലനത്തിന്റെ കേന്ദ്രബിന്ദുവായി പ്രവർത്തിക്കും. ചലച്ചിത്രാവിഷ്കാരങ്ങളെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള അതിന്റെ ഇടപെടലിനൊപ്പം, ജനപ്രിയ ഫിക്ഷന്റെ എല്ലാ അവ്യക്തതയിലും പിരിമുറുക്കത്തിലും വൈരുദ്ധ്യത്തിലും കേന്ദ്രീകരിച്ചുള്ള സംവാദങ്ങൾക്ക് ഒരു സന്ദർഭം പ്രദാനം ചെയ്യുന്ന രീതിയിലാണ് തീസിസ് രൂപകൽപ്പന ചെയ്തിരിക്കുന്നത്. സമകാലിക വിമർശന സിദ്ധാന്തങ്ങളെ അടിസ്ഥാനമാക്കി അഡാപ്റ്റേഷൻന്റെ ഉൽപ്പാദന സന്ദർഭങ്ങൾ, അവയുടെ ചരിത്രപരമായ വൈവിധ്യം, ദ്രവരൂപത്തിലുള്ള അതിരുകൾ, ഐഡന്റിറ്റികളുടെ രൂപീകരണം അല്ലെങ്കിൽ ആത്മനിഷ്ഠതകൾ, വായനക്കാർ, പുനർവായനകളുടെ ഉൽപ്പാദനവും പുനർനിർമ്മാണവും രൂപപ്പെടുത്തുന്ന ചരിത്രപരമായ അവസ്ഥകൾ എന്നിവയെക്കുറിച്ച് പ്രബന്ധം അന്വേഷിക്കും. നോവലിന്റെ പൊതുവായ പരിവർത്തനങ്ങൾ, കാഴ്ചപ്പാടുകളിലെ വ്യതിയാനങ്ങൾ, ദൃശ്യമാധ്യമ അനുരൂപങ്ങൾ, അതിന്റെ വർദ്ധിച്ചുവരുന്ന ജനപ്രീതിയും ദീർഘായുസ്സും മുൻനിർത്തി അതിന്റെ പ്രാധാന്യം ജനകീയ സംസ്കാരം എന്നിവയെ പഠനത്തിൽ ഉൾപ്പെടുത്തുന്നു.

പ്രധാന വാക്കുകൾ: ജെയ്ൻ ഐർ, അഡാപ്റ്റേഷനുകൾ, തരം, കാഴ്ചപ്പാടുകൾ, ജനപ്രിയ സംസ്കാരം

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Charlotte Brontë's first published novel, *Jane Eyre* (1847) at once fascinated the readers and to this day commands the admiration of the world's reading public. Published over a century and seven decades ago, *Jane Eyre* continues to find appreciative audiences throughout every decade. Passionate readers have celebrated Brontë's life and her texts in many ways- artistic, materialistic, biographical, and as fanfiction. Her most popular novel, *Jane Eyre*, has inspired numerous film adaptations, prequels, sequels, revisions, retellings, and spin offs – the most famous of which is Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966). The creation and acceptability of other art forms and merchandising based on *Jane Eyre* underline its undiminished popularity. By considering the ways in which cinema and literature of the past and contemporary times offer a loving homage and alternative perspectives on Brontë's classic, the thesis discusses the influence and significance of *Jane Eyre* and its adaptations in academic circles and contemporary culture.

The thesis is divided into six chapters. The present introductory chapter briefly surveys the importance of Charlotte Brontë's magnum opus in academia and in the sphere of popular entertainment. It outlines the approaches on adaptation, genre, race, gender, and popular culture employed at various stages in the thesis. The chapter would present a biographical sketch of Charlotte Brontë, paying attention to her other notable works and the major thematic concerns and characteristics they

share. The chapter presents the objectives of the research, introduces the fiction and film adaptations of *Jane Eyre* chosen for the study, highlights the rationale behind the choices and the method of categorization of the texts, proposes the strategies of investigation specific to each chapter, and stresses on the importance of the investigation.

This study investigates the fictional worlds in the selected fiction and film adaptations of *Jane Eyre* in the light of the existing post-colonial and feminist scholarship on *Jane Eyre*, to expand the existing scholarship on its adaptations. It would explore the depiction of race and gender of the world of the original and the worlds of the adaptations. The thesis analyses the fictional world of *Jane Eyre*, the hypotext, in relation to the fictional worlds of its selected adaptations, the hypertexts, to identify recurring trends centred on race and gender in the selected fiction and film adaptations of *Jane Eyre*.

Charlotte Brontë (1816-1855) was the sole surviving daughter of an incredibly talented yet tragic family, and the only one to receive public acclaim before her premature death at the age of 38. Brontë published *Jane Eyre* at the age of 31. Like many other Victorian women of her times, Brontë also shared the precarious lot of abject poverty and self-suppression. Her hard-earned literary success brought her some degree of independence, ironically through the adoption of a sexless pseudonym, Currer Bell. Her choice of themes like a woman's struggle to establish her identity in a patriarchal world, and injustices faced by the Victorian women are appropriate to her times. Her real-life experiences were blighted by frequent deaths in her family, social stigma, and even unrequited love. She sought

fantasy as a means of escape from the harsh realities of her life. Like her most celebrated character, Jane Eyre, Charlotte Brontë was also a small, plain woman with a fiercely independent mind and a passionate spirit. Her finest novel explores the dilemma of an intelligent young Victorian woman's right to love, be loved and to retain her independent spirit. It is a tale that bears the stamp of the author's direct experience, told with ardour and honesty. Jane's determination to love and to be loved on equal terms earned admiration of many readers while it also scandalised a few.

Charlotte Brontë has also published three other novels: *Shirley: A Tale* (1849), *Villette* (1853) and *The Professor* (published posthumously in 1857). *Shirley* displays the author's engagement with women's rights and industrialisation. It is the story of two contrasting women; the shy Caroline Helstone who symbolises the bare life and plight of single women trapped in the oppressive atmosphere of a nineteenth century Yorkshire rectory, and the vivacious Shirley Keeldar, who is liberated by the inheritance of a local estate and its wealth. Charlotte Brontë's unrequited love for Constantin Heger, the headmaster of the school at Brussels where she worked as a governess for some time inspired her other novels, *The Professor* and *Villette*. While *The Professor* narrates the story of a young Englishman, William Crimsworth, from his early and formative years in Yorkshire as a clerk to his appointment as a teacher at an all-girls school in Brussels where he falls in love with a fellow teacher, *Villete* uses the plot material of *The Professor* and expands it. It narrates the story of Lucy Snow, who decides to travel to Villete, a fictional Brussels, and works her way up to become an English teacher in a boarding school in a French-speaking locality. The

novel focuses on the uncertainties of Lucy's life, the cultural and language barriers, religious pressures, romance, loss, depression, and loneliness.

Not just Charlotte Brontë, but also her sisters–Emily Brontë, and Anne Brontë– provoked curiosity and kindled interest in readers and critics alike. People across time and borders find the lives of these extremely talented women exciting. Several biographies and documents on the Brontës are continually being produced that keep drawing interest of large audiences. For instance, in 2016, Britain's *BBC One* aired a two-hour long television film titled *To Walk Invisible* on the lives of Brontë sister. Since 1895, *Taylor and Francis*, the prestigious publishers of scholarly resources, have dedicated a journal titled, *Brontë Studies*, solely for further study and research on matters concerning and related to the Brontë family, their writings, background, and their place in literary and cultural history.

It is undeniable that the Brontë home near the Yorkshire moors and all their personal tragedies may have been an inspiration for their work. Although all three siblings died before they reached 40, their works and life experiences are hard to separate. However, misery and depression cannot be considered their sole influence. The finest works of these strong and intelligent women highlighted their fierce, bold, and passionate spirit which was unconventional and unacceptable in the Victorian England they lived in.

Jane Eyre opens opportunities to scholars and readers to study and interpret the text in numerous ways. The scholar should have adequate knowledge on the life and society of the Victorian England and on the Jane Eyre-like life of its creator,

Charlotte Brontë. The evolution and transformation of the novel through a century and seven decades offer a perfect ground for analysis.

Jane Eyre, the story of an orphan-governess who eventually marry her employer through all its mysterious twists appeals to all its readers alike. From being poor, unloved, and orphaned, Jane Eyre grows into a fearless and independent woman and later gains the love of her soulmate. In terms of readership and its devoted audiences, not many classic novels have persisted in today's world as Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. The novel has attracted readers since 1847 and remains fresh in the reader's mind even in the twenty-first century. Literary, stage and television adaptations have kept the novel vibrant and alive.

Timelessness therefore becomes one of the best qualities attributed to the novel. A paramount quality of *Jane Eyre* is its high cultural prestige. The novel provides rich analytical material for every critical school and figures in the reading lists of most university courses on Victorian literature. In *A Breath of Fresh Eyre: Intertextual and Intermedial Reworkings of Jane Eyre*, Margarete Rubik and Elke Mettinger-Schartmann observe, "few literary works have proved their capacity to act as sources of literary inspiration, to be constantly re-assembled, re-contextualised, re-imagined, re-written, so exuberantly as *Jane Eyre*. There is hardly another novel that has been re- worked in so many adaptations for stage and screen, has inspired so many painters and musicians, and has been so often imitated, altered, parodied, extended by prequels and sequels, plundered for motifs and used as a point of departure" (11). Moreover, many of the social issues which the novel dealt with continue to be of concern even today which include the relationship between men

and women, the sizable gap between the poor and the rich and the education and independence of women. Being a text that opens opportunities for scrutiny, and which never goes out of vogue, a study on the same is relevant even today. By 1996, when Patsy Stoneman published her seminal study, *Brontë Transformations,* the novel had been translated into twenty-four languages and was available in the UK in twenty-three different editions (Rubik 9).

The novel and its numerous adaptations offer myriads of possibilities for scrutiny. Scholars have looked upon *Jane Eyre* through feminist, post-colonial, postmodern, Marxist, psychoanalytic, and queer angles. Early reviewers have criticised *Jane Eyre* for the seemingly subversient elements in the novel, in the belief that these elements undermined social, religious, and political conventions. They were convinced that the novel rejected Christianity and instead advocated gender and class equality. Though modern critics agree with those early assessments, they praise the novel for the same subversive qualities.

Nineteen novels based on Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* are selected for the study. They are:

- Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966)
- Elizabeth Newark's *Jane Eyre's Daughter* (1999)
- Jasper Fforde's *The Eyre Affair* (2001)
- Emma Tennant's *Adele: The Hidden Story of Jane Eyre* (2002)
- Sharonn Shinn's *Jenna Starborn* (2002)
- Kay Woodward's *Jane Airhead* (2009)

- Claire Moise's *Adele Grace and Celine: The Other Women of Jane Eyre* (2009)
- Sheila Kohler's *Becoming Jane Eyre* (2009)
- April Lindner's *Jane* (2010)
- Sharon Browning Erwin's *Jane Slayre* (2010)
- Tara Bradley's *Jane Eyre's Husband: The Life of Edward Rochester* (2011)
- Karena Rose's *Jane Eyrotica* (2012)
- Eve Sinclair's *Jane Eyre Laid Bare* (2012)
- Lyndsay Faye's *Jane Steele* (2016)
- *Jane Eyre (Manga)* conceived by Crystal S. Chan and Sun Neko Lee (2016)
- Cora Holmes' *Rochester: A Memoir* (2016)
- Marian Tee's *Mr. Rochester: British Bad Boy* (2017)
- Sarah Shoemaker's *Mr. Rochester* (2017), and
- R.Q. Bell's *Edward Rochester: The Master of Thornfield Hall* (2017).

The ten titular film adaptations chosen for the study are:

- Christy Cabanne's *Jane Eyre* (1934)
- Robert Stevenson's *Jane Eyre* (1943)
- Franklin Shaffner's *Jane Eyre* (1949)
- Lamont Johnson's *Jane Eyre* (1957)
- Delbert Mann's *Jane Eyre* (1970)
- Julian Amyes' *Jane Eyre* (1983)
- Franco Zeffirelli's *Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre* (1996)

- Robert Young's *Jane Eyre* (1997)
- Susanna White's *Jane Eyre* (2006), and
- Cary Fukunaga's *Jane Eyre* (2011).

The second chapter titled, '**Reader, I Married Him: Generic Fluidity and the Ease of Appropriation in *Jane Eyre*'s Adaptations'** discusses the numerous genre transformations the novel has undergone with or without retaining the inherent prejudices on race, class, and gender in the world of the primary text. The chapter attempts to explore eleven out of nineteen adaptations of *Jane Eyre* that fit into various genre categories such as detective fiction, crime fiction, science fiction, erotic fiction, young adult's fiction, vampire fiction, fictional autobiography, and graphic fiction. The texts selected for analysis are Jasper Fforde's *The Eyre Affair*, Lyndsay Faye's *Jane Steele*, Sharonn Shinn's *Jenna Starborn*, Karena Rose's *Jane Eyrotica*, Eve Sinclair's *Jane Eyre Laid Bare*, Marian Tee's *Mr. Rochester: British Bad Boy*, Kay Woodward's *Jane Airhead*, April Lindner's *Jane*, Sharon Browning Erwin's *Jane Slayre*, Sheila Kohler's *Becoming Jane Eyre* and *Jane Eyre (Manga)* by Crystal S. Chan and Sun Neko Lee.

Popular genres are very much flexible and not self-contained and rigid categories. They evolve interactively in relation to specific historical formations. The novel has undergone a change of genre through its retellings and re-interpretations. This chapter studies the transformation of a Victorian classic into the above-mentioned genres, made possible with relative ease. Both the worlds within the texts and the fictional world which lodges the various genres become prominent in such adaptations. In a postmodern context, it is generally argued that genres are

no longer relevant as postmodern texts are characterised by their tendency for generic transgression.

Fredric Jameson, in *The Political Unconscious* (1984), regards genres as "literary institutions" (66). Genres work as social contracts between the author and the readers, that specifies the "proper use of a particular artefact" (66). Jameson argues that genres are political and a reflection of the socio historical circumstances (66). In *Marxism and Form* (1974), Jameson had earlier proposed that the key aspect of a text is its form (327). Robab Khosravi, in her article that studies the generic elasticity of *Jane Eyre*, "Blurring Boundaries and a Generic Matrix in *Jane Eyre*'s Political Unconscious", observes that the interpretation of a text is "inseparable from literary form and that all interpretation is historical" (311). In *Jane Eyre*, we can observe a montage of genres in its elaborate fusion of romance dialectics, gothic transgressions, autobiography, and bildungsroman, and manifestations of a utopian imagination, in which the poor, plain, and the obscure governess achieves both financial independence and marital bliss grounded on intellectual equality.

In effect, *Jane Eyre* incorporates a technique of montage that facilitates the eventual collapse of the boundaries of genre. This chapter studies the theoretical implications of such transgressions for an interpretation of *Jane Eyre*'s generic affiliations in the light of its numerous offsprings pertaining to different genres. The chapter analyses the treatment of gender and race in all the selected fiction adaptations of *Jane Eyre* that have experimented with various genre types, transcending the boundaries of the obvious generic taxonomies of the source novel. The text is defiant as it challenges conservative writing conventions by mixing

genres and presenting itself as a collage of genres. Brontë's text is a hybrid of genres. It advertises itself as a fictional autobiography, structures itself as a bildungsroman, plays with motifs from gothic fiction, and presents itself as an archetypal romance.

Jasper Fforde's *The Eyre Affair* (2001) is a spin off which is a detective novel based on Brontë's original. Thursday Next is a literary detective in an alternate-reality England, able to leap in and out of classic texts. Thursday Next, a Special Operative, is a literary detective in a fictional world different from reality of today, as different as fact is from fiction. Set approximately in 1985 England, the story depicts Thursday's daily life: cherishing the short and quick visits from her time-travelling father, taking her pet Dodo to the veterinarian, and hunting down villains through the pages of classic literature. The antagonist, criminal, and villain, Acheron Hades has just kidnapped the titular character of Charlotte Brontë's novel. If anything happens to the original manuscript of a novel, every single copy on the planet will be similarly affected, so Thursday must enter the story herself to prevent Jane from becoming a victim of literary homicide. Though many critics have read *Jane Eyre* as a plea for gender equality and independent femininity, no other fanfiction successor has contextualised Jane as a detective who succeeds in questioning the patriarchal authority of Mr. Rochester through her curiosity.

As Sandro Jung observes, "Jane not only traces male criminality, but her curiosity leads her to realise her own selfhood. Her growing individuality is articulated through a public, expressive and inquisitive self that to Victorian middle-class notions of propriety appeared transgressive and 'criminal' (Jung, 21).

According to Jung, Jane's ideas of individuality are in clear contrast with those of the other female characters of the novel such as traditional servant figures like Mrs. Fairfax who, through her silence, endorses her master's crime. Constructing Jane as a detective, Jung comments, "Charlotte Brontë succeeded in creating a version of the female self that was revolutionary and attempted to overcome her state of dependence through curiosity and inquiry." (21) The possibility of a world of crime and investigation is very much present in Brontë's original text, which Jasper Fforde explored later.

Lyndsay Faye's *Jane Steele* (2016) is an intersection of crime and romance, one in which the protagonist is a vigilante, deadly and determined, who would not hesitate to stab or slay the adversaries in her path. She keeps a low profile and pretends to be a polished high class English lady to avert suspicious eyes. Throughout the novel, we see bloody murders for which Jane Steele is responsible, along with the horrors of war during the period of British colonialism in India. The crimes of the heroine never see the light, nor has she ever even been accused to be acquitted. It is an ingenious experimentation on the fluidity of the gothic romantic novel and its assimilation into the popular genres of crime/murder mysteries and thrillers. The text deviates from the general conventions by presenting a murderer's account of murders rather than unravelling the identity of the criminal at the end of the novel.

The actual world of *Jane Eyre* is displaced by a world of science and fantasy in Sharon Shinn's *Jenna Starborn* (2002). Free from the constraints of the parameters of the realist mode, science fiction allows its creators to imagine other

times and other worlds. Science fiction creates the possibility of making space for visions of a better world, which can be a perfect utopian type or a chaotic dystopian one. In *Jenna Starborn*, Shinn re- imagines *Jane Eyre* as a science-fiction romance tale, with the titular character a bright but impoverished nuclear technician and half citizen, who falls for her employer, Everett Ravenbeck. Jenna, the protagonist, as a baby, was harvested from the genetic tanks of the planet Baldus, who very much like little Jane was resented and scorned by her adopted family, but brave enough to follow her heart, despite challenges and hostilities. Jenna is sent to school on a different planet and grows up to become a nuclear technician who eventually gets employed at Thorrastone Park. Being a half citizen while Ravenback is a first-class citizen of the planet, Jenna believes that nothing will work between them only to later identify his dark secrets. From the fictional Victorian world imagined by Brontë, Shinn steers her course to another possible world within a fictional text.

In *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Brontë portrays a fully realised heroine who challenges the conventional roles of women in actual societies as well as in fictional worlds. Cynthia Carlton Ford in her research paper “Intimacy without Immolation: Fire in Jane Eyre” observes that to broaden Jane’s role as heroine, “Brontë had to go beyond the genres open to her — the novel of manners, the Gothic, and the governess novel — to establish a new genre: the feminist fairytale” (1).

Jane Eyre’s transformation into erotic fan fiction is noteworthy. In establishing this genre, Brontë pinpoints Jane’s specifically female dilemma of how to achieve intimacy while still maintaining independence. Subsequent writers have taken advantage of the gaps Brontë herself left in her text and have explored the

world of physical passion and sexual desires in their adaptations of *Jane Eyre*. Deviating from the morals of the Victorian society, Jane Eyre has been pictured as a sensuous woman, driven by sexual desires, whose words and deeds are largely influenced by her sexual choices. Notable texts of the genre are *Jane Eyrotica* (2012) by Karena Rose, *Jane Eyre Laid Bare* (2012) by Eve Sinclair and *Mr. Rochester: British Bad Boy* (2017) by Marian Tee.

Maria Ioannou in "'A brilliancy of their own': Female Art, Beauty, and Sexuality in Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre", studies the portraits of Rosamond Oliver and Blanche Ingram in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. Ioannou argues that these portraits participate in the nineteenth century dialogue about women in art, and capture Jane's convictions on the theme of sexual love (323). Ioannou points out that Jane is Rosamond; the subject (artist) identifies with the object (model) in an equation of female beauty with agency and capacity for sexual feeling. Brontë makes use of the recurring theme of fire, as a metaphor for self-sacrifice and immolation at times when Jane feels like her independence is threatened. The smaller candle and hearth fires are overshadowed by the bigger fire of destruction. Erotic renditions of the novel have also kept the fire alive, in its corporeal sense. *Jane Eyre* erotic fanfiction dwells on the sexual fantasies of the protagonist, and homoerotic dominance to liberate Jane from the sexual oppression of the Victorian times.

Jane Eyre has been retold to cater to the needs of different audiences. April Lindner's *Jane* is aimed at teenagers and young adults who navigate forbidden romance and haunting secrets. It is a modernised retelling of Jane Eyre's story,

apparently aimed at the "young adult" book audience. Lindner's Jane Moore becomes entranced by her brooding yet magnetic employer and finds herself amid a forbidden romance and serves to be an irresistible teenage romance interwoven with a darkly engrossing mystery. This contemporary retelling of the classic *Jane Eyre* promises to enchant a new generation of readers.

Yet another young adult spin off novel, *Jane Airhead* by Kay Woodward, features Charlotte, a thirteen-year-old girl, obsessed with *Jane Eyre* who longs to live in a Yorkshire manor and find a suitable Mr. Rochester for her mother to marry. Intertextual elements are very strong throughout the text. These renditions appeal to the interests and priorities of the young adult and adolescent reading groups.

The world of zombies, vampires and the like, a stark deviation from the seemingly real world of the principal text, marks *Jane Slayre* (2010) important in the context of the thesis. The popular *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2009) spoof has spawned a series of books taking works of classic literature and sliding into them macabre monsters and bloody battles. *Jane Slayre* by Sherri Browning Erwin is one such experiment. *Jane Slayre* takes this approach and adds a supernatural twist to it. Interspersed in the original story is the heroine's struggle to vanquish vampires. Erwin makes Jane protect the world from vampires, voodoo priests, zombies, and werewolves. Raised by a vampire clan which she detested; Jane learns from her uncle that she is a slayer by birth. When she takes up the job as governess at Thornfield estate, she becomes romantically involved with Mr. Rochester, only to discover that he is hiding a violent werewolf in the attic of the mansion, who turns out to be his first wife. The Victorian world of *Jane Eyre* is transformed into a

menagerie of bloodthirsty, flesh-eating, savage creatures of the night. Vampires, zombies, and werewolves transform Charlotte Brontë's unforgettable masterpiece into an eerie paranormal adventure set in yet another fictional world which terrifies and delights.

The intersection of imaginative and actual worlds is efficiently established in fictional autobiographies. Such retellings draw inspiration from the intensely private lives of their creators and the experiences of the actual worlds they live in, to create a seemingly real yet fictional world. Sheila Kohler's *Becoming Jane Eyre* (2009) traces the relationship between Jane and her creator Brontë. Kohler's work serves as a fictional autobiography based on Victorian romance. *Becoming Jane Eyre* proves a fresh take on Brontë's novel that serves as a meditation on the creative process, and Brontë's passionate act of creation. The unconventional and extremely talented Brontë sisters were budding writers in the 1840s, a time when women's lives were considered unworthy of literary treatment and women were inconceivable as authors. Charlotte has already received harsh rejection letters. Biographical accounts suggest that the orphaned Jane Eyre, the independent- minded governess at Thornfield Hall who falls in love with her employer, Mr. Rochester, whose wife rants madly in the attic of the mansion, is drawn from Charlotte's own most painful emotions: her longing for her dead mother and her older sisters, her bitter experiences at boarding school and as a governess, and her unrequited passion for her married teacher. It has been agreed among the critics that the character of Helen Burns seems to owe something to the precocious, spiritual, and stoic Maria Brontë, who died of consumption. Patrick Brontë's suffering from cataract might have

influenced Charlotte's portrayal of the eventual blindness of Edward Rochester. The Brontë sisters' experience at Cowan Bridge, where Maria and Elizabeth first fell ill, is very relevant to Lowood and close parallels have been traced between Mr. Brocklehurst and Reverend Carus Wilson. Jane's respect for the master of the house, Mr. Rochester and his superior knowledge might have been a reflection of Charlotte's respect for her master, M. Heger in Brussels.

May Sinclair's discussion in *The Three Brontës* and Kathleen Tilloston's "Novels of the Eighteen Forties" are two excellently levelheaded accounts of the Brontë-Heger affair. Charlotte Brontë has made a solid, elaborate, and apparently objective record of the kind of fantasy, which we all experience, when we use our imagination to reshape our experience. In this fictional autobiography based on a bildungsroman text narrated in the first person, Jane Eyre recounts her life in detail without shielding or holding anything back. Jane reveals the secrets hitherto hidden from the outside world, be it the sadistic torments she endured at Gateshead Hall from the Reeds, or her sensual awakening at Lowood. Jane, in her private autobiography, reveals the unvarnished accounts of her life. Kohler mirrors the setting and the first-person perspective of Brontë's original to explore the thoughts and feelings of the author even more deeply. The autobiographical elements of *Jane Eyre* have been examined in detail. Charlotte Brontë's incorporation of contemporary social issues and historical accuracy has also received scrutiny as they project the social issues in the early Victorian England.

Jane Eyre's adaptation into *Manga* (a popular graphic literature mode associated with Japanese popular culture) conceived by Crystal S. Chan and Sun

Neko Lee exemplifies the novel's transcendence across continents and its ease of assimilation into various cultures. This graphic adaptation provides the readers with new insights and offers enjoyment. The speech bubbles that differentiate the novel's English and French dialogues, carefully and aesthetically presented artwork, and cliff hangers make *manga* a pleasurable experience for readers across ages and cultures. Even though the longevity of these adaptations might be a question, the sheer number of resources on genre transformation alone deserves critical attention, as they are signs of *Jane Eyre*'s perennial resourcefulness.

The third chapter of the thesis titled, '**Muffled and Stifled: Deciphering the Voices of Other Characters in *Jane Eyre*'** offers insights into alternate perspectives on Brontë's novel based on its selected adaptations. The actual world of text production and the possible worlds manifested by the different authors shall serve to be the focus of analysis. The world within the original and the adaptations would be read in the light of the perspectives of race, gender, and class. The remaining eight novel selected for discussion are Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), Claire Moise's *Adele, Grace, and Celine: The Other Women of Jane Eyre* (2009), Emma Tennant's *Adele: The Hidden Story of Jane Eyre* (2002), Tara Bradley's *Jane Eyre's Husband: The Life of Edward Rochester* (2011), Sarah Shoemaker's *Mr. Rochester* (2017), Cora Holmes' *Rochester: A Memoir* (2017), R.Q.Bell's *Edward Rochester: The Master of Thornfield Hall* (2017) and Elizabeth Newark's *Jane Eyre's Daughter* (1999).

It is beyond doubt that a critical project needed to be redefined around a more dialectical relation between writing, history, and ideology. Pierre Macherey in

a *Theory of Literary Production* (2015) suggests that a text could be defined by its absences or silences. The process of textual production is defined by resolutions wherein the author chooses not to confront ideological contradictions yet does not manage to conceal it fully. He also distinguishes between what a text cannot and would not say:

> The speech of the book comes from a certain silence, a matter which it endows with form, a ground on which it traces a figure. Thus, the book is not self- sufficient; it is necessarily accompanied by a certain absence, without which it would not exist. A knowledge of the book must include a consideration of this absence. (95)

The chapter intends to analyse the absences and silences in *Jane Eyre*, uncovered by various writers in their novels, that offer alternative perspectives on Brontë's narrative. Firstly, the selected novels would be scrutinised for visible and covert race related attitudes. While texts like *Wide Sargasso Sea* explicitly expose racist stigmas and prejudices, supposedly hidden in the principal text, the study would also investigate the other adaptations to identify if the same applies to other texts as well. Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* deals with the themes of ethnic inequality and the harshness of displacement and assimilation. Rhys makes a post-colonial argument when she associates Antoinette's husband's eventual rejection of her to her creole heritage. The novel does not shy away from uncomfortable truths from British history like colonialism and slave trade that had been neglected in Brontë's narrative. Taking Bertha Mason as her subject, and the mad woman's early life in the West Indies, Jean Rhys transforms Charlotte Brontë's wintry romance into

a tropical romance and liberates the romantic material that is suppressed in *Jane Eyre*. In doing so, she reworks Bertha, the unspeakable figure of otherness, into an unnameable self, and creates a new, albeit elusive, stage for the inner self.

Both Brontë and Rhys dramatise their protagonist's focalization to reinforce, or to subvert the conventional notions of character and identity. In their seminal work, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (1949), Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar consider Bertha Mason of Brontë's novel as a foil to *Jane Eyre*. Brontë presents Bertha as a strange wild animal, and as "the truest and darkest" (360) double to her protagonist.

As Alexandra Nygren points out, Bertha is a casualty of colonialist, patriarchal, and ableist hegemony (117). Because of her colonial subject position, Bertha has less access to justice and her insanity aggravates her subjectivity. The fictional worlds of most of the adaptations also seem to carry forward the notion of otherness. The second character that would be looked at through the angle of post colonial criticism would be Adele, Rochester's ward, presumed to be his illegitimate (French) daughter. Described in Brontë as talentless, and materialistic. Adele remains a severely misrepresented character in *Jane Eyre*, primarily for being born to a French mother. Adele is supposedly rescued from the corruption of Europe through Rochester's integration of her into the British mainland. *Adele: The Hidden Story of Jane Eyre* (2002) and *Adele, Grace, and Celine: The Other Women in Jane Eyre* (2009) present Jane Eyre's story through the perspectives of other marginalised characters of Brontë's original text.

Secondly, *Jane Eyre* adaptations would be analysed through the perspective of gender. Whether *Jane Eyre* functions primarily as a feminist text has been a source of debate in recent literary and gender discourses. As Lawren Owsley observes, “Jane’s ultimate marriage and pregnancy seemingly diminish her desire for independence and her resistance to socially constructed norms of appropriate femininity. However, these concessions on Jane’s part of her prized self-sufficiency are not sacrifices of her earned agency, but, alternatively, cognitive choices that she can afford to make because of her purchased societal station” (54).

Jane Tompkins challenges the existing histories of the Western world, indicating how those masculine histories share the assumptions of the genre they are claiming to describe. Tompkins argues that the Western domestic novel can also be seen as a response to women’s participation in a range of reform activities. In the secular environment of the West, man confronts death and nature in ways which marginalised and displaced women as subjects, constructing a fictional world of masculine bonding or competition in which women are either distractions or objects to be rescued, reformed, or won (10).

Jane’s inheritance provides her with the luxury to negotiate her own interpretation of the social conventions of marriage and motherhood. Financial autonomy that Jane achieves towards the end of the novel allows her to view romantic involvement as a potentially equitable partnership rather than as an opportunity for social or monetary security. Jane manages to exercise control and begins to have a truly egalitarian relationship with Rochester. Charlotte Brontë, in Owsley’s words “simultaneously relieves Rochester of his corporeal masculinity,

effectively elevating Jane to the position of head of the household" (54). Though she is thrust into different hard situations, she expresses her autonomy through her decisions like leaving Rochester or returning to him thereafter. Brontë creates an alternative Victorian reality which challenges the views on female autonomy. Cheryl A. Wilson in "Female Reading Communities in *Jane Eyre*" places reading practices in *Jane Eyre* in their historical context and explores Brontë's use of communities of female readers to challenge the forces of patriarchy that policed the pleasure, creativity, and intellect of Victorian women (131). Brontë combines the potential of the community with the reader. All female reading groups aimed to educate women, particularly middle and lower middle-class women, advocated the need for reading rooms in places like the waiting rooms of train stations. Such reading groups served as alternatives to the traditional Victorian family circle in which the paternal head routinely policed resources available for reading to the women in the family to keep women's solitary pleasures in check and the fabric of the family intact.

As Keith A. Jenkins points out, biblical types were deeply ingrained in the Victorian mind, and the traditional interpretations of the Bible were often used to reinforce the subordination of women (306). Charlotte Brontë creates a new kind of typology that allows her to retain the power of biblical imagery and language, while channelling it in new directions. Brontë transfers the locus of spiritual and otherworldly paradise to our everyday world of work, leisure, sexual fulfilment, and romantic unfulfillment. Brontë, through her rejection of the male-dominated narrow world, offers in its place a vision of a paradise of fair and equal opportunity for its male and female. In the repressing of the realities of the actual world in which

Brontë lived to create her novel, she in turn created another alternate world that is grounded in gender justice.

The principal text of analysis, centred on Jane, the protagonist, is narrated through the perspective of a woman. However, later writers have done justice to both the sexes. The significance of the play of gender politics lies in the fact that there are a reasonable number of adaptations both from the perspective of the female and the male.

Nicole Pyler Fisk in his paper "I Heard Her Murmurs: Decoding Narratives of Female Desire in *Jane Eyre* and *Secresy*" offers a new perspective on the various elements in the novel, including female friendship and Bertha's laugh. Fisk suggests that, in the featured texts, there is both a narrator and a listener, with the greater responsibility being on the latter (218). Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the only prequel to the novel centred upon Bertha Mason, set in Jamaica in the 1830s explores the early relationship between Antoinette Cosway (Bertha) and her suitor, Rochester. Like *Jane Eyre*, it tackles women's issues, but with a decidedly different perspective. It is a haunting, compelling new take on the familiar story. The novel stands out in its foregrounding of madness and racist stigma.

Three other sequels, *Adele, Grace, and Celine: The Other Women of Jane Eyre* by Claire Moise, *Jane Eyre's Daughter* by Elizabeth Newark, and *Adele* by Emma Tennant deal with other women characters in *Jane Eyre*. Moise's novel works on the premise that Celine did not die, but faked the news of her death so that her daughter Adele could have a better life as an English lady. Newark's novel revolves around Janet Rochester, the imagined daughter of Jane and Rochester.

While *Jane Eyre* addressed the concerns of the white middle-class protagonist and her aspirations and challenges, the rest of the novels rely on the life and experiences of working-class women like Grace Poole, and foreign women like Celine Varens, Adele Varens and the creole, Bertha Mason. Women's life is the major concern in the four novels mentioned above.

When we consider the male characters of *Jane Eyre*, every retelling boils down to the perspective of Edward Rochester, Jane Eyre's master-turned-husband. Charlotte Brontë's male hero, Edward Fairfax Rochester, though a typical female invention, is "more than a stereotyped figure or attractive dummy to which we can attach our hopes and dreams" (Hardy 6). There is individuality and substance in Rochester which is brought into moving relation with the individuality of Jane Eyre.

Tara Bradley's *Jane Eyre's Husband: The Life of Edward Rochester*, Sarah Shoemaker's *Mr. Rochester*, Cora Holmes' *Rochester: A Memoir*, and R.Q. Bell's *Edward Rochester: The Master of Thornfield Hall* retain the spirit of the original Brontë classic, deftly tracing Edward's life from birth to death. These versions look upon Rochester's dark, brooding, Byronic character and his all-consuming love for the meek, plain governess. Sara L. Pearson in "The Coming Man: Revelations of Male Character in Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre" alludes to the Second Coming of Christ as depicted in the Bible as a means of characterization for three men in her novel: Mr. Brocklehurst, Mr Rochester and St John Rivers. Through these allusions, Pearson argues that Brontë depicts Mr. Brocklehurst as an Anti-Christ, Mr. Rochester as a false Christ and St John Rivers as the bride of Christ (299). This is a reading which potentially surprised and shocked readers worldwide.

In her paper titled "'He is rather peculiar, perhaps': Reading Mr Rochester's Coarseness Queerly", Claire O' Callaghan re-examines the accusation of coarseness directed at Edward Rochester, the male protagonist of Brontë's classic. Elizabeth Rigby condemned Rochester as coarse for challenging normative modes of male gender and sexuality. Callaghan's paper provides an original reading of Brontë's novel that explores Rochester's coarse behaviour as representative of queer masculinity. The paper heavily draws from contemporary queer theoretical discourse. Callaghan suggests that Brontë's male protagonist, Edward Fairfax Rochester, articulates a wide range of queer masculine possibilities that valuably register a resistance to the dominant ways of being in the nineteenth century. Critics have also read Mr. Rochester as the image of Charlotte Brontë's own wounded, bewitching masculine energy.

The fourth chapter of the thesis titled, '**From Words to Visuals: *Jane Eyre* and the Hollywood Romantic Myth**', focuses on the ten titular movie adaptations of *Jane Eyre*. *Jane Eyre* has been adapted into several theatre performances, operas, radio plays, television films, and feature films from the early 1900s. It will be necessary to offer accounts on how the various media of publishing and broadcasting: cinema, radio, and television, each with its own determinants and specificities, also interact in complementary and contrasting modes. The first titular adaptation of *Jane Eyre* came up in 1910 while the most recent one was released in 2011. The latest theatre adaptation premiered in 2016 in the UK. The focus of the fourth chapter is on ten feature films that were released under the title "Jane Eyre", which heavily rely on the plot of the novel, at times staying true to the storyline of

the actual novel and at times strikingly different from the same, released between the period from 1934 to 2011.

Not all movies have done justice to the principal text. Many times, we see the Jane Eyre of the movies falling love-sick for her employer and harbour the desire to enjoy the safety and security which Rochester might possibly be able to offer. This is a disgrace to the Jane Eyre of the novel who was brave, strong-willed, and determined, who left Rochester behind upon the realisation that she can never be truly wedded to him in the existence of his living, but insane wife, Bertha Mason. Movie adaptations mostly portray Jane Eyre as an ordinary woman satellite revolving around a male star, succumbing to its gravitational pull.

W.L. Andrews, in his article on the film adaptations of *Jane Eyre* titled, "Is This Film the Real "Jane Eyre"?" points out:

> They (Brontëans) will hold that a film, however good by the criterion of its own world, cannot do justice to a Brontë masterpiece or any other great literary novel. It may have the same names for the characters, exploit some of the same incidents, and try faithfully to reproduce the same atmosphere; but complete translation from the idiom of the novel to the idiom of the screen is impossible (1).

Sarah E. Fannings in her essay, "The Many Faces of Jane Eyre: Film Cultures and the Frontiers of Feminist Representation" analyses screen adaptations of Brontë's classic. She looks at the different cultures of feminism starting in the 1940s and examines how *Jane Eyre* has been differently portrayed across the

cultures, at times when gender norms are rigorously challenged in the culture. While all the movies depict the racial tendencies inherent in the source novel, not many have paid attention to Jane's coming to financial independence through the inheritance from her uncle. A fair share of *Jane Eyre* movies has also shied away from mutilating Rochester to protect his masculinity.

The chapter aims to read *Jane Eyre* films in the light of the perennial questions and concerns on adaptations such as the extent to which things are lost and gained in the process, discernible patterns of adaptations, reception by audience, and integration into popular culture, and influence of the medium on the conveyance of the source text's message, and insights. The engagement of the adaptations with Brontë's original would be contextually examined with reference to the dominant ideologies during the times in which each of the adaptations was released.

The fifth chapter of the thesis, titled, '**Parody, Pastiche and Pop: *Jane Eyre*'s Enduring Appeal in Contemporary Culture**' is designed to provide a context for debates centred on the pleasures of popular fiction in all their ambivalence, tension, and contradiction. Drawing on contemporary critical theory, the chapter will investigate production contexts, genres in their historical diversity and fluid boundaries, texts and the formation of identities or subjectivities, readerships and the historical conditions which shape the production and reproduction of re-readings. This chapter would investigate the terrain of the production, reproduction, and reception of popular fiction as a matter of historical, cultural, and political concern. The age-old dichotomy of high v/s low literature can no longer provide an adequate basis for satisfactory accounts of how certain

narratives influence and impinge upon the lives and experiences of their readers. This is not necessarily based on the subversion of existing literary canons and creating alternate canons, but of confronting the negotiations between popular fiction and classic fiction. It is a negotiation of social discourses, along with the desires and fantasies, identities, and aspirations of its heterogeneous readership**.**

In *Gender, Genre, and Narrative Pleasure* (2012), Dereck Longhurst points out that the agendas which have been constructed with a matter of time around the critical study of popular fiction are complex and varied but there were some rather simple starting points:

> [t]he desire to challenge the literary canon as "given" rather than as produced and reproduced in specific historical formations; dissatisfaction with critical practices which (a) endorsed the simplistic dichotomy of 'major' vs. 'minor' literature, (b) assumed as self-evident the category of 'literature', (c) constituted historical formations as mere 'background' to the literary text within which meanings were intrinsic rather than produced (3).

While *Jane Eyre* is a prominent text in canonical literature, the text has also paved the way to the creation of numerous popular culture texts, inferior to the original in terms of craft and narrative strategies, yet extremely popular in contemporary culture.

The chapter focuses on the interplay of the fictional worlds of the texts in contemporary popular culture with due focus on the merchandising and other art

forms centred on *Jane Eyre.* Jane Eyre is not just a celebrated Victorian classic, but it also ranks among the most popular novels in English literature of all time. Rubik draws a parallel between Chris Baldick's observation on the longevity of modern myths based on Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein*, and the longevity of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. Rubik opines, "Like all modern myths, its life has been ensured 'not by being retold at great length' but by its reduction 'to the simplest memorable patterns' (Baldick 3) and their ubiquitous and often de-contextualised dissemination in popular culture" (10).

The study of popular fiction, as is widely recognized, plays an important part in cultural analysis. Reading popular fiction is no longer generally considered to be an activity which a reader should admit shamefacedly. Popular narratives were generally denigrated as narcotics, and its consumers as unenlightened ones. The field of critical study is now characterised by stimulating and provocative debates which are rooted in cross- disciplinary inquiry and those which address the key questions concerning social groups and their relation to the culture which they belong to, represent, or inhabit. The ways and means by which various institutions and processes that are involved in the production of popular fiction, shape the way texts and genres create, distribute, and circulate meanings and ideological values are significant**.** How do popular cultures interact with one another is another question. How do popular fiction address their readership in terms of class, race, gender, age, regionalism, national identities is yet another significant question. It is important that we identify the material conditions under which reading as a social practice takes place. Attention must be paid on how readers draw upon to make sense of a popular

narrative. The chapter also identifies simple patterns into which *Jane Eyre* has been reduced which makes it relatable to many across the world ensuring the novel's perennial appeal in popular culture.

The final chapter concludes the points of the investigation and ties together the multifarious approaches with which *Jane Eyre* adaptations have been looked at in this study. It sums up the analysis based on the generic transformations, shifts in perspectives, visual media adaptations, and the significance of the novel in popular culture foregrounding its ever-increasing popularity and longevity.

Attempts have been made to study the nature and relevance of many *Jane Eyre* adaptations. However, it is to be noted that in most cases such efforts were focused upon a single adaptation, retelling or reinterpretation. The area lacks a comprehensive study. The diverse aspects of the novel have been dealt differently by different artists. Some of the responses foregrounded the novel's romance, some others highlighted its rebellion, and some critically dealt with the novel's blind spots. Brontë scholars have responded to different facets of the novel and its adaptations differently. Barbara Schaff's article "The Strange After-Lives of Jane Eyre", highlights the importance of *Jane Eyre* as a prominent work of both the British literary canon and popular culture. *Jane Eyre* has been read in the light of the recent ethical turn by Brontë scholars like Bárbara Arizti. In "Landscape and Character in *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*", Thomas Loe takes the novel as a perfect example of a work that goes beyond the typical in the depiction and treatment of landscapes to generated meaning and definition for its charcters. Wolfgang G. Müller is interested in the paradoxical status of Jane Eyre as both a

derivative from a period classic and as an independent post colonial classic. Margarete Rubik adopts a cognitive approach to the textual world presented in Fforde's novel and indulges in Fforde's dissolution of the ontological difference between fact and fiction. Scholars have also been fascinated by Fforde's playful, but reverential parody of *Jane Eyre* and his creation of an alternative universe which runs parallel and occasionally against the original. Adaptations for child readers are the focal point of Marla Harris's paper, which covers prose adaptations, but above all comic books and graphic novels. Despite the popularity of the novel, scholarly works from the Indian subcontinent on *Jane Eyre* are negligible.

With fresh titles being frequently and religiously added to fanfiction and atleast one television/feature film being made every decade, the novel never ceases to amaze. Hence a study on its perennial poularity and fanfiction proliferation is the need of the hour.

CHAPTER II

"Reader, I Married Him": Generic Fluidity and the Ease of Appropriation in *Jane Eyre*'s Adaptations

Genre is generally understood as any kind of category based on a criterion or a set of criteria. It is one of the oldest and basic features of literature. Genre is generally understood as fiction or nonfiction in terms of the nature and subject; high class or low class corresponding to subject matter and treatment; innovative and traditional; printed or performed and so on. This classification of texts based on various criteria has been in practice since the classical times. As Daniel Chandler observes, "[i]n literature the broadest division is between poetry, prose and drama, within which there are further divisions, such as tragedy and comedy within the category of drama" (1). Since inception, genre has been studied, conceptualised, and employed by authors, readers, and literary critics alike. Genre corresponds to essential and specific ways of using human discourse and is also widely examined from a functionalist perspective. The objective of genre is to classify, and classification is a prerequisite in the understanding of an object of study. Literature, folklore, music, dance, paintings, cinema, craft, and various other media forms use genres to distinguish their different kinds of cultural productions. Therefore, a genre is either attributed to a given cultural form or is invented in the process of taxonomical classification. While genres like the romance, horror, gothic, realistic, modernistic, historic, feminist and the like are commonly connected to the reading and interpretation of fictional texts, genres like naturalist, impressionist, and

expressionist apply to paintings, and genres like realistic, melodramatic, feminist, and western apply to cinema. Texts or cultural products are compared and contrasted and thereafter classified based on basic features. Products falling into a particular group of classification generally share some of those features. They stand in relation to many other texts which do not share common features and are hence grouped into different genres. Despite the medium being literature, cinema, painting or any other, a cultural product always shares commonalities with others of its kind, placed within the same genre, while at the same time also shares dissimilarities with other products of its kind, placed within other genres. Interestingly, there are no fixed rules as to what constitutes a particular genre. Features and factors essential for the classification are medium specific and would hence largely vary from one medium to another. As a result of this flexibility, many genres are in use and new ones are still emerging or are formulated from time to time.

The world of genre studies has continued to grow rapidly, gaining variety and complexity with the concept of genre being examined through a wide variety of intellectual traditions. Since its inception, several perennial doubts have plagued genre theory**.** Robert Allen famously used the analogy of a botanist dividing flora into different realms to describe the process of breaking up or classifying literature and art into genres. He notes that for most of its 2,000 years, “genre study has been primarily nomological and typological in function. It has taken as its principal task the division of the world of literature into types and the naming of those types - much as the botanist divides the realm of flora into varieties of plants” (44).

However, the analogy with biological classification into genus and species misleadingly suggests a “scientific” process.

In *The Anatomy of Criticism* (1957), the formalist literary theorist Northrop Frye presented certain universal genres and modes as the key to organising the entire literary corpus. Contemporary media genres tend to relate more to specific forms than to the universal genres: tragedy and comedy. Nowadays, films are routinely classified as thrillers, rom-coms, horror, fantasy and so on— genres that every adult in modern society is familiar with. The same applies to television genres such as ‘game shows’ and ‘sitcoms’. While we have invented names for countless genres in many media, theorists also argue that there are many other genres and subgenres, for which we do not have names yet. Carolyn Miller suggests that genres do not lend itself to taxonomy as genres “change, evolve, and decay” and the current number of genres in any society is “indeterminate and depends upon the complexity and diversity of the society” (163). The classification and hierarchical taxonomy of genres is neither a neutral nor an objective procedure. There are no undisputed frameworks and maps of the system of genres and classification within any medium, though literature at times may lay some claim to a loose consensus among critics and theorists. Furthermore, there is often considerable theoretical disagreement about the definition of specific genres. “A genre is ultimately an abstract conception rather than something that exists empirically in the world”, notes Jane Feuer (144). One theorist’s genre may be another’s sub-genre or even super-genre while technique, style, mode, formula, or thematic grouping may be treated as a genre by some others. Themes, at least, seem inadequate as a basis for defining genres since,

as David Bordwell observes, “any theme may appear in any genre” (147). In the discussion on the rhetoric of cinema, he raises questions on the basis, nature, and formula of classification of television genres as animation and documentary, filmed play, comedy, tragedy and so on. In passing, he offers a useful inventory of categories used in film criticism, many of which have been accorded the status of genres by various commentators.

Since its publication in 1847, *Jane Eyre*’s fame has firmly established it as ‘common property within the culture’. Along with its popular status as a classic text, since the mid nineteenth century, the novel has pervaded virtually every form of cultural medium. The novel was reworked into a melodrama for the Victoria Theatre in London merely three months post publication. As S.E. Fanning observes, “[the] plethora of adaptations since, which to date include graphic novels, television serials, films, plays, radio dramatisations, erotica, children’s narratives and various other reformulations, demonstrates not only the durability of the novel but also the perennial impulse to retell the story of *Jane Eyre* anew practically every decade” (41).

Julia Kristeva states that every text is an absorption of another (383) while Barthes observes that every text is an intext (390), signifying that art is dependent on art and may incorporate allusions to previous works. Within the larger spheres of language and activity, writers negotiate multiple, sometimes conflicting genres, relations, and subjectivities, so that there is always the potential, in some genres and in some situations more than others, for generic resistance and hybridization. (Bawarshi, 11)

Hybridizations eventually result in alternate versions, that amount to a series of pop culture excesses as is the case of the nineteenth century classic, *Jane Eyre*. How has the trajectory of "the poor, obscure, plain, and little" (Brontë, 292) Jane been reimagined, reinvented, or reinterpreted by authors in several Neo-Victorian novels is a pertinent question. Neo-Victorian novels draw upon "Brontëan legacy to invite particular readings of their central female characters as well as issues of gender, race, and class" (Regis, 192). The chapter traces the experimentation of twentieth and twenty first century writers in advancing new modes of fiction while often revitalising the inherent gothic and romantic traits of *Jane Eyre*. It is interesting that the classic gothic-romantic *Jane Eyre* has been transformed into various genres that include crime/detective fiction, children's literature, young adult fiction, vampire/zombie fiction, sci-fi, erotic fiction, and graphic fiction. This chapter explores eleven adaptations of *Jane Eyre* that fit into each of the above-mentioned genre categories: *The Eyre Affair*, *Jane Steele*, *Jenna Starborn*, *Jane Eyrotica*, *Jane Eyre Laid Bare*, *Mr. Rochester British Bad Boy*, *Becoming Jane Eyre*, *Jane Airhead*, *Jane*, *Jane Slayre*, *and Jane Eyre (Manga)*.

The literary genre of crime fiction has a 250-year history, dozens of sub genres, and thousands of examples. After a beginning that identified them as low class and marginal, crime fiction has come a long way gaining respectability and acceptance. Critics differ in their opinions regarding categorisation, characteristics, and conventions of crime fiction. Stories with a common interest in crimes and criminals such as detective stories, crime thrillers, murder mysteries, suspense stories and so on make up a highly popular genre of popular culture fiction. Reading

detective fiction is a global pastime and new trends breathe fresh air into this genre every day. According to Rebecca Martin, if widespread cultural diffusion and longevity are indicators of the success and significance of a literary genre, detective fiction requires no further evidence to prove its worth (xii). She establishes that though literature without moral value was denigrated in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, reading texts that offer mere entertainment is no longer deemed as a waste of time. In Martin's words, "in our contemporary culture, this question about morality is no longer asked so directly" (xv). There is a consensus regarding the popularity of crime fiction that it is driven by an enduring appeal on the aberrations of human behaviour. Moreover, the psychology of the law breaker has also remained a trope that has evoked interest in the readers across the globe.

The genre known as 'crime fiction' with its numerous sub-genres like detective, mystery, locked room, spy and so on is believed to have stemmed from the gothic traditions of the eighteenth century. Gothic novels followed the pattern of uncovering secrets and mysteries, identifying the motives of terrible and heinous crimes, and restoration of humanity's faith in justice. From a historical perspective, stories about crimes and criminals were circulated among the lower class and barely literate people in England in the early nineteenth century as a deterrent to crime. (Martin, 4-5). The detective, also popularly referred to as a 'private eye' was mainly an American phenomenon that sprang during the golden age (the period between the two World Wars). A private eye in fiction is a figure characterised by "superhuman intellectual" abilities along with "tenacity" and "toughness" (Horsley, 73). Generally regarded as male, the loner is tougher and smarter than the outlaws he encounters in

his investigation. In *Pistols and Petticoats: 175 years of Lady Detectives in Fact and Fiction*, Erika Janik traces the evolution of the female detectives, their struggles in law enforcement and crime fiction in the past 175 years. From the beginning, police work was considered a male domain and women who donned the badges faced discrimination and harassment. It took another century for women to enter forces as full-fledged officers. Within the covers of popular fiction, women writers started creating crime fiction and female sleuths. Male authors also contributed to the creation of a healthy handful of female detectives. The nineteenth and early twentieth century female crime fighters were characterised as independent, resourceful, and courageous, excited legions of crime fiction fans, and paved the path for the birth of celebrated characters like "Nancy Drew, Jane Marple, … and Kay Scarpetta" (Janik, 7).

Jasper Fforde is an English novelist, who is the author of several novels which crossover genres and contain incredible mixtures of fantasy, thriller, and humour. *The Eyre Affair* (2001) is the first instalment of his phenomenally successful *Thursday Next* Series featuring Thursday Next, literary detective without equal, fear or a boyfriend. It is an engaging and captivating rendition of *Jane Eyre* suffused with suspense and thrill as Next is entrusted with the mission to locate criminal Acheron Hades and rescue his hostage, the literary character Jane Eyre.

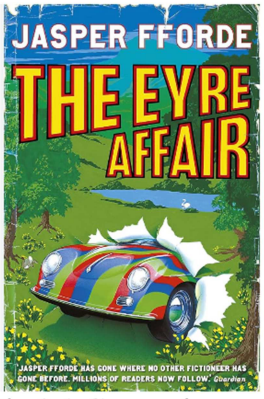


Fig 2.1 Cover photo of *The Eyre Affair*

Thursday Next sets out to find a way to enter the text to prevent as well as reverse any damage that Hades has

inflicted upon the text. Fforde features Thursday Next in an alternative and off beat Britain in 1985 whose culture is literature based. Britain is still fighting Russia in the Crimean War and vampire infestation is common that a special team of officers are dead set on locating and brandishing vampires, and their prevailing culture is literature based. Erica Hateley in “The End of the Eyre Affair, Jane Eyre, Parody, and Popular Culture” observes that Thursday’s world is related to, but separate from, our own. Cloning of long extinct animals is a hobby, pagers exist along with vacuum-valve based computers, an old biplane is the only aeroplane, time travel is possible, and werewolves and vampires are actual criminal problems (1024). In the Britain of 1985, cloning is a reality, time travel and alternate realities a routine, tours to literary worlds not unheard of, and literature is taken very seriously that literary relics are kept under “bullet proof glass and guarded by electronic surveillance and armed officers" and the “enthusiasm for art and literature in the population undiminished” (Fforde 12-13). Crimes against literature are rampant in the lucrative literary market and the LiteraTec department of the Special Operations (SpecOps) Network was exclusively dedicated to the investigation of literary crimes such as the murder of fictional characters for personal motives; like the murder of Quaverly from Martin Chuzzlewit (Fforde 204), murder of real people advocating movements or supporting certain authors; like the young surrealist who is stabbed to to death by French impressionists (Fforde 9), manuscript destruction or stealing; attempted destruction of Jane Austen’s letters by a deranged individual and an organised attempt to hold Jonathan Swift’s papers to ransom (Fforde 12), abduction of literary characters for heavy ransom or other motives; kidnapping of Jane Eyre by Acheron Hades (Fforde 295), attempting to peddle poorly forged sequels; like “Rime II- the

Mariner Returneth" (Fforde 161) or tampering of realities within fictional texts; as in the pirated copy of Doctor Faustus with a rewritten happy ending (Fforde134). The events of the novel are set to action with Acheron Hades, the third most wanted criminal in the world, who can steal thoughts, and project images at his will, who was invisible to film; hence no records to his appearance ever found, and who would kill while he laughed (Fforde 119) kidnaps Jane Eyre from the original Brontë manuscript.

Thursday's version of *Jane Eyre* is different from the *Jane Eyre* of our times. In the *Jane Eyre* Thursday knew of, Jane never returns to Thornfiled. Instead, she accompanies St. John Rivers on his missionary endeavours to India, a "rather flawed climax" which caused "considerable bitterness" within Brontë circles. (Fforde 38) Jane Eyre is a recurring motif of the text with a pocket copy of the novel saving the protagonist from a bullet injury (Fforde 55) and Edward Rochester stepping out of the book to attend to the injured Thursday before the arrival of the medics at the site of an accident. Thursday's world and the worlds of the texts within are so permeable that with the help of technology, people travel back and forth the boundaries. Even without the use of technology, as a child, Thursday experiences her reality dissolve as she makes her way into one of her favourite novels, *Jane Eyre*. Unfettered by the rigidity of the narrative, Thursday, in her childhood, was mysteriously transported from the Brontë Museum where she was attending a book reading of the scene in the novel where Jane first meets Rochester. Spotting Thursday in front of him, Rochester, who was aware that he could "stretch the boundaries of the story a small amount" tried to steer his horse away to one side of the lane and crashed to the

ground. She assumes that Rochester would have been amused by “the rare appearance” people like her made in his otherwise “long and repetitive existence” in the narrative. (Fforde 67) It is made known to the reader that before Thursday’s intervention in the novel, Rochester never fell from his horse in any copies of *Jane Eyre* anywhere. In a moment when Rochester himself comes out of his narrative and converses with Thursday, he opines that her intervention “improved” the narrative and made Jane and Rochester’s meeting “more dramatic” (Fforde 190). Jane Eyre is deployed as a literary artefact readers can read and physically enter.

The barrier between fiction and perceived reality in Fforde is softer than what we think in a manner that any change that happens to the original manuscript of a text becomes reflected in all other copies of the text, anywhere on the planet. Excision of characters from original manuscripts can prove fatal to all its copies. Fforde contemplates a world where an inexplicable “cross fertilisation” (211) between fiction and reality has been happening for over a hundred years. Intertextuality and the space between the text and reality are central conceits of Fforde’s text. Thursday’s uncle, Mycroft’s invention of the Prose Portal, a device that facilitates transportation to literary worlds and back, creates a literary mayhem when it fell into evil hands. Convinced that he should sabotage a novel with great fan following for a greater impact, Hades decides to make *Jane Eyre* his target. With Jane Eyre’s abduction from page number one hundred and seven of the original manuscript, the narrative, that had been going on for ever since Brontë completed it, collapses, primarily because the novel is written in the first person. Frenzied readers and *Jane Eyre* fans were quick to notice the strange goings-on as early as twenty

seconds of Jane's kidnapping as "Jane Eyre is bigger than me and bigger than you" (Fforde 288). Thursday states, "governments and fashions come and go but Jane Eyre is for all time" (Fforde 267). The novel takes an interesting turn when Thursday Next enters the fictional world of *Jane Eyre* to locate Hades and free his hostage. According to Fforde's narrative, Thursday and Rochester's attempt to vanquish Hades drastically changes the narrative in such a way that Thornfield is burnt down, and Rochester's palm shattered; catastrophic events which were not part of the novel till date. Acheron Hades gets killed by Bertha Mason before she commits suicide and the ethereal cries that Jane Eyre hears towards the end of the novel were Thursday calling out Jane in a hoarse whisper imitating Rochester's voice. Thursday exits the novel thereafter and the ending of the novel is altered forever.

Christina Hardyment in her interview with Jasper Fforde observes that it was his heroine who gave an exciting life to Jane and Rochester instead of Brontë's original plan to "let her dwindle into a wife in India with soppy St John" (2). In *The Eyre Affair*, Thursday observes that the Brontë Federation experts and *Jane Eyre* fans were not pleased by the new ending which handicapped Rochester and tore down his mansion but were pleased to witness the long-awaited union of Jane and Rochester, with ninety nine out of a hundred readers expressing their delight in the new ending in a recent survey (Fforde 361). Thursday Next, the heroine is like Jane Eyre in many respects. Mervyn Rothstein records Ffordes' description of Thursday Next as "a feisty heroine like Jane Eyre, who is very strong at times but also a bit weak romantically" (Rothstein**,** 2). She is free, independent, willing to change jobs,

determined to decide for herself the trajectory of her life. She is also reunited with her crippled lover, years after their unfortunate separation. A matter of fact handling of the reality-bending moments of the novel makes the readers engrossed in the text.

Lyndsay Faye's *Jane Steele* (2016) surprises readers by retelling *Jane Eyre* in the world of crime and guilt. Faye is an American novelist noted for her Sherlock Holmes pastiches and critically acclaimed for novels like *Jane Steele*, *Gods of Gotham*, and *Observations by Gaslight*.

Jane Steele is one of the finest examples of the fluidity of *Jane Eyre* which facilitates the movement from romance to crime and other genres with relative ease. The transformation is not forced upon the reader nor is it an exercise of adjustment and compromise. Unlike a conventional crime fiction that taps on humanity's desire to uncover the truth behind mysterious crimes, often a murder or any other unsolvable crimes that sets the action in motion, murders committed by the protagonist are at the heart of this novel. The reader is never in the dark nor does the author create a puzzle that the reader is compelled to solve. It is a witty and gristly reimagining of Brontë's tale where the protagonist Jane Steele, ranges from being an orphan, to an intelligent governess and to a cold-blooded serial killer. Faye's narrative is also unique in the aspect that it lets the serial killer, Jane Steele, get away with all five murders she committed with the readers never wishing the opposite. In an interview which discusses *Jane Steele*, Faye says that she wrote the novel out of profound respect for Charlotte Brontë and

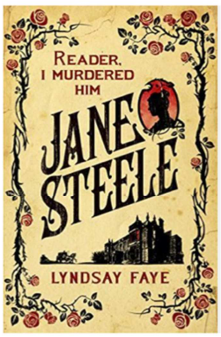


Fig 2.2 Cover photo of *Jane Steele*

the hardships she had to endure in a hellish boarding school whose miserable living conditions snatched the lives of her two sisters. (Hobbits and Jane Eyre, 50)

The novel follows her course of being orphaned and humiliated by her family to her eventual escape and the blood chilling murders she commits through her life and a trail of corpses that she leaves behind. Unapologetic and resilient, Jane Steele drifts a lot away from Jane Eyre in her characterisation. Unlike Jane Eyre, she isn't a true orphan. Her mother, Mrs. Anne Laure Steele was alive, yet detested throughout their familial estate, when the novel opens. She was "tragically and irrevocably" (Faye 6) French and beautiful, which Steele considers to be the major ground for the ill treatment she was subjected to. Jane's mother had informed that though the rest of the family considers them as mere dependents, Jane Steele was the rightful heir of Highgate House and once the documents to the effect were found, she would come in possession of her property. However, she also expressed her concerns on the matter as inheritance for girls is a "highly complicated matter". (Faye 7) Jane Steele commits her first murder at a very tender age while resisting a sexual assault. She remarks that of all the murders "committed for love and for better reasons", the first was the "most important" (Faye 3).

She draws inspiration from *Jane Eyre* and in Steele's words, "the work inspires [me] to imitative acts" (Faye 3). Jane's relationship with Jane Eyre is what makes this novel "its own type of piece de resistance" ("Fay Lyndsay: JANE STEELE.", 1 Feb 2016) She is unlike Jane Eyre to whom the brawny shoulders of the north wind carried ethereal cries. The boarding school which taught Jane Eyre to be submissive and meek, made Steele transform into a wolf in a girl's clothing.

While Eyre sought sophistication and modesty, London transformed Steele into a pale wide-eyed creature with an errant laugh, a lust for life and for dirty vocabulary, and a knife in her pocket. She commences her account of her murders with the statement “Reader, I murdered him” (Faye 5) set against the “Reader, I married him” in *Jane Eyre* (Brontë 517). Her first victim was her cousin Edwin Barbary, the son of her father Jonathan Steele’s half-brother, Mr. Richard Barbary. Her initially amiable and seemingly peculiar relationship with Edwin Barbary took a dark cast in 1837. She had evaded from his sexual advances even before and thoughts about their childhood proximity brought disdain and shame in her.

The idea of class is pertinent as well. Mrs. Patience Barbary, Jane Steele’s aunt never missed a chance to make insinuating remarks on Jane and her mother’s social class. Mrs. Barbary considers inviting the Steele’s for a family meal as an act of benevolence as she “graciously allows” (Faye 13) them to sit at the same table as hers. Jane was criticised for being capricious and inexcusable while Edwin was the epitome of class and manners. Anne Steele passes away in her sleep leaving Jane in the custody of her malicious aunt. Her rights were ripped off in a series of psychologically violent deeds such as being denied the privilege of being present at her own mother’s funeral, as she was considered an “unprincipled child” who showed “little restraint” (Faye 16) and the “bitter fruit of a poisonous tree” (Faye 17). At the beginning of her saga, Jane Eyre tucks herself away in a curtained alcove and attempts docility. Morbidity had been the close companion of Jane Steele ever since her mother’s death and deceit came to her as easy as breathing. While Mrs. Reed sends Jane Eyre away from Gateshead to Mr. Brocklehurst’s Lowood charitable institution, Mrs. Barbary sends Jane Steele away with Mr. Vesalius Munt

of Lowan Bridge charity school. Jane Steele was sent away to be taught manners, cease being stubborn and make herself useful to the society when she comes of age. Mr. Munt is a representative of the puritan idea of art being evil and artists sinful which leads to his immediate rejection of Jane Steele as she was born to an artist mother, with what he perceives to be a "troubled mind" (Faye 26). Faye accommodates the idea of madness through Anne Laure Steele and how she is perceived by the other characters around her. While Jane Eyre was relieved and happy to leave Gateshead, Jane Steele's reluctance is remarkable. Her assertion that she "should not", "need not" and "will not" (Faye 29) leave Highgate House as she is its rightful owner is a pivotal point in the novel. Edwin Barbary's intervention and his statement that "he is the man of [the] house" (Faye 30) and that he wishes Jane Steele to stay is equally important from a gender perspective. Edwin Barbary who tried to assault Jane Steele at a later point in the novel was pushed by Jane off the cliff with all her might leading to his demise. This accidental murder governed an enormous percentage of her life thereafter. She realises how calm she remained after the incident and how least affected she was by the same. Never shedding a tear, Jane Steele plotted her escape and is surprisingly seen to have fallen fast asleep after her first murder. To escape the investigatory proceedings; Jane Steele demands Mrs. Patience Barbary to send her away with Mr. Munt. Faye's narration of Jane Steele's travel to Lowan Bridge by a coach is perhaps one of the most self-reflexive instances in the novel.

The novelist identifies an author's description of the travel for the edification of people who have already travelled in coaches, as a vexing practice. Defamiliarisation qualifies to be overtly laborious that Faye simply lists a series of

phrases for the unlikely reader who might not have travelled much and thereby fulfils "[my] literary duties" (45). The initial episodes at Lowan Bridge and Lowood are strikingly similar with their iron fist headmasters and extremely puritan ways. The following chapters of *Jane Eyre* and *Jane Steele* portray the plight of girls at such charity schools and their supposed redemption through torment and sacrifice, both self-induced and compulsive. The passive aggressive punishment system at Lowan Bridge includes denied meals, inking the offence on forehead, assigning hours' worth of lines to read and write, and sending students to sleep early without letting them prepare for the next day's tests and repeating the punishment for poor grades.

Faye elaborates on social hierarchies through illustrative anecdotes on the four groups of girls who attended Lowan Bridge. Class and gender and their manifestations are the central points of the discourse. Girls from wealthy families who were considered unsophisticated to deserve their fortunes, were the first group who attended the schools in the hope of finding a good position in the house of a higher class or become more marriageable. The second group was made up of girls expected to be governesses and had parents who were bankrupt. The third group of girls, Jane Steele herself included, were those at the mercy of their moneyed relations and sent away to become drudges on other people's estates. The final group was plagued with poverty, though devoid of the pressures of becoming either marriageable or becoming governesses. The novel's direct reference to *Jane Eyre* comes at the episode when Jane Steele gets punished after having been deprived of a week's dinner, for mourning her mother and screaming while asleep. Mr. Munt

dismisses Jane's mother as a "debauchee who perished deliberately" and as a "disgrace to the natural order —an embodied disaster" (Faye 71). Jane Steele was treated predictably poor for the seven years she spent at Lowan Bridge as she could not shake off the stigma of a lunatic for a mother and became adept at grieving and suffering agonies. For herself and for fellow prisoners, Jane "lied, and grown still better at it" (Faye 77) and over the years, her "slithering, slinking capabilities" (Faye 77) had been honed. By the age of sixteen, she was almost like a reptile; poisonous and deadly.

Jane Steele's life at Lowan Bridge takes a different turn after she stumbles upon a series of sexually charged letters from her headmaster to Miss Lilyvale, her favourite teacher. The episode of Mr. Munt's daily reckoning, a session where students and staff at Lowood accuse others of moral crimes, they have committed the earlier days such as skipping a prayer, proves detrimental to Becky Clarke, Jane's best friend, as she fearlessly names Mr. Munt for the "unwanting attentions" (Faye 81) he had been subjecting Miss Lilyvale to, making the latter distressed and uncomfortable. Clarke, on the contrary, was ridiculed for her parents' business of printing lurid erotic fiction and punished with one meal a day for making a mockery of Mr. Munt's reckoning. Mr. Munt's remark on education of girls is noteworthy. He states that his idea of egalitarianism and belief in the value of education "for every child, including even *females*" (Faye 82) has garnered him much criticism. He scoffs that girls like Becky Clarke have proven this criticism right. Confessions by Miss Lilyvale, such as girls who are told to visit Mr.Munt's study never "speak of it afterwards" and that "he shows them pictures, suggests things…things he accuses

them of secretly longing to do" (Faye 85) further tarnishes Mr. Munt's image while at the same time raising concerns on the hypocrisy of the Victorian morality and the exploitation of girls in boarding schools and charity institutions. The plight of Jane Steele who grew accustomed to carrying invisible scars inked in flesh tone over flesh is disturbing. While Clarke was starved, Munt intimidated Steele with possible expulsion from the school and later admission into a mental asylum where inmates were chained to bed covered in their own filth, subjected to ice baths and mercury doses with leeches on scalps and fed "less customary" (Faye 91) than at Lowan Bridge. When left to choose between ending Clarke's punishment and her own expulsion, Jane Steele had no second thoughts. Munt's convoluted decision paved the way to his own demise when young Jane sought to grip the sharp letter opener and plunge it into her headmaster's neck, thus committing the second murder of her life for good reasons. Her stoic nature is intensified through the author's observation that she "paused to be medically certain" (Faye 94) that Mr. Munt was dead. Jane Steele's lack of regret is evident in her eventual engagement with the reader with her question whether the latter would prefer her to have "felt remorse in the aftermath of [my] second slaughter?" (Faye 95) She recollects her initial feelings after the murder and remarks that the brutality of the act sent fearsome tremors through her small frame for days, but she never regretted ending the life of her abusive and merciless headmaster. Steele advises the readers to abstain from killing for love as it is one of the most "tangled acts" in an already "twisted world" (Faye 95). This point marks Jane Steele's transition from a confined school environment into the world out in the open with its opportunities and dangers. Young girls fled Lowan Bridge to various parts of England in the chaos that Munt's murder created. Jane Steele and Clarke

arrived at London, homeless and horridly inexperienced. The centre of the Great British empire was least welcoming but galvanising. Steele sought to face her demons living a penniless, wretched life in a city which considered girls of her age untrustworthy. The news that inspector Sam Quillfeather oversaw Mr. Munt's murder investigation took a toll on Jane Steele's peace of mind as he was the same police officer who had investigated Edwin Barbary's murder and had bombarded her with queries. Faye's choice of professions for Clarke and Steele is also noteworthy. While the meek and docile Clarke took up the job of a street singer, Jane Steele who "penned atrocities" (Faye 117) had to jot down an account of the murder she herself committed mingling her memory and imagination and prudently leading out her own guilt. Penning crimes suited Jane Steele's interests as it was "criminally engaging" (Faye 116) and she and Clarke were offered lodging in exchange at the Grizzlehurst household.

Set against Brontë's pious and virtuous Jane Eyre, Jane Steele does not shy away from her amorous feelings, nor does she reject it. She instead chooses to explore it and indulge further in the joyous, "clamorous sensation" (Faye 123) reading erotica printed by Clarke's family "indecorous number of times" (Faye 123) and liking it. Readers are prepared to learn about Steele's third murder through her accounts of Mr. Grizzlehurst's abuses on his wife which culminated in the death of their unborn baby. Jane Steele resorted to push a drunken Mr. Grizzlehurst into the depths of the river Thames, killing him, thus accomplishing her third murder. She carried the remainder of the gin home and drank to her fill. Steele faces a great blow when Clarke finds out that she was the one who murdered their headmaster and

leaves her instantly. As a young woman, Jane Steele also indulges in pleasures of the flesh and has fleeting relationships with many young men. The fourth murder Jane Steele carries out however appears rushed and less organic in the movement of the plot. Judge Frost, her friend Tilly's client turns out to be her next target. Steele murders Judge Frost, for the attempted rape of the twelve-year-old daughter of Tilly, and threatening Tilly with arrest for prostitution. Steele poisoned Frost's drink with arsenic, thus killing him. She leaves for Highgate House thereafter and remarks to have absolutely no regret again in "this latest casualty" (Faye 149).

The next major episode of Jane Steele's life commences with her spotting an advertisement for the position of a governess at her ancestral house, High Gate by its new owner, Charles Thornfield. Jane learns with ambivalent feelings that her aunt Mrs. Patience Barbary was dead and Highgate House, which Anne Steele had insisted was Jane Steele's, passed into the care of law. Jane Steele's tenuous claim to the property is threatened threefold as female inheritance is practically non-existent in the 19th-century England, she has a criminal history that can be revealed any time, and Highgate has a new owner. Under the pseudonym Jane Stone, Jane Steele takes up the job of an undercover governess of an Indian girl, Sahjara, Mr. Charles Thornfield's ward, in what seems to be an Indian household in an English mansion. Murder comes so naturally to Steele that the moment she encounters Mr. Sardar Singh, Mr. Thornfield's butler, she becomes pensive of how hard the task of killing such a stout man would be. That she has never met Mr. Singh before, nor has he done anything wrong to her or anyone else is barely considered.

From a post-colonial angle, Jane Steele's first encounter with the Indians is very significant. Seeing Sahjara, Mrs. Garima Kaur, and Mr. Singh for the first time brought immediate relief to her as she was freed of the burden to manage anyone who "fit more into the society" (Faye 152) than she herself. Besides being an outcast and murderer herself, Steele believes to be in a better station than the Indians she sees at High Gate House, right away dismissing their identities and histories. Ironically, she even pretends to be of a severe breed of English women "who abhor vice and irregularity" (Faye 154). Mr. Thornfield is seen referring to Sahjara as a "wild beast" (Faye 155) in the English woman's charge who needs to be tamed and made sophisticated. The household is stereotypically Indian with "bizarre dishes" (Faye 156) served alongside teas, "curry scented bread" (Faye 156), "white tiger skin" (Faye 157) spread floors, "glass jarred spices" (Faye162), set against salt and pepper Jane Steele was accustomed to, alongside onions, garlic, and ginger root all emitting smells that overwhelmed the English governess. Steele mistakes Sahjara to be of half Indian-half foreign parentage, only to realise later that she was in fact a true Indian princess. She was Thornfield's friend's daughter while Thornfield himself was an English doctor born to a British entrepreneur in Lahore, pre-partition India. He was a pitied and despised man in the English soil who embraced a foreign culture and allowed his "Britishness to fade in the searing desert sun, politeness and gaslight and snobbery leached into dunes" (Faye 166). Steele excuses Sahjara's fear of being treated unnatural, her brown skin, her forwardness in speech and familiarity with the households only because at the core Jane Steele was a flawed woman who was a "murderess four times over" (Faye 168). Not just Steele's remarks but also Sahjara's recollections of the memories of her Indian household are

stereotypical. According to Sahjara, her Lahore house "smelled like livestock and incense" (Faye 170) with vivid memories of vendors, traders, and merchants bargaining and fortune tellers divining from maps and stars. The impending dangers at Highgate that *Jane Eyre* readers are already aware of, in the form of the lunatic locked up in the attic is suggested through an underground cellar under construction which is not at the disposal of the members of the household save Mr. Thornfield and Mr. Singh. However, we never listen to evil laughs of Bertha Mason which were attributed to Grace Poole in the principal narrative. The reader is left to wonder what is locked up in the cellar under maintenance. Jane Steele, like her readers, also fails to figure out the nature of the cellar. In her conversations with Mr. Singh, Steele tries to understand if the cellar was meant to be a wine storage, prayer hall, or something else. Not only does Mr. Singh dismiss her assumption, but also offers no headway to it. The novel dives deeper into the history of the Anglo-Sikh war, the feud between the Khalsa and the East India Company, Sahjara's missing trunk from Punjab which the Company men were after, and discusses English propriety, pretences to English manner and Steele's attempts at solving the twin mysteries of the forbidden cellar and the missing trunk. Under the threat of a possible assault in the woods, Jane Steele's true nature comes out. She wields her knife and swears at Mr. Thornfield, whom she mistakes to be an attacker. She attributes her deviation from English propriety and the salty tongue to "hard living and harder men" (Faye 219). At a later point in the novel, Steele also observes how the master of the house "seemed to harbour the horror of making un-English blunders" (Faye 224) in her presence. Jane Steele is also seen looking down on Mrs. Garima Kaur who knew and spoke "little English" (Faye 229). On the other hand, Mr. Thornfield retorts to the

comment by mentioning that Steele had “spoken like a true colonist” (Faye 229), for Mrs. Kaur was a polyglot who could speak in Punjabi, Hindi, Arabic, Parsi, Turkish, and Pashto. At the same time, Thornfield’s attitude towards the Indians is quite ambivalent as in another instance, he describes Sahjara’s speech “jabbering” (Faye 232), instantly mocking the imitation of the coloniser’s language by the colonised. He is also seen to tease Sahjara for her desire to watch a Khalsa staged in the English mansion. He playfully questions the reason why she wanted to scare their English governess away by demonstrating “foreign antics” (Faye 232). Faye takes an interesting step leaving out the much-anticipated lunatic for Thornfield’s wife and Jane’s discovery of the truth. Instead, the hidden truth of the cellar of Highgate Hall is unveiled as its transformation into a mortuary or dead house with Dr. Thornfield as its coroner. She also realises that her master performs autopsies of the dead and has for some strange reason denied himself the privilege of touching the living for his “sins” (Faye 247). She later learns from Sardar Singh that the duo had committed some grave mistakes long time ago, and Thornfield considers him culpable of the crime and denies himself touch as a form of “self mortification” (Faye 253) Steele adds a fifth and final victim to the list of her murders by instantly stabbing to death Jack Ghosh, a spy sent by the Company man, Augustus Sack, to retrieve the lost trunk of Sahjara, which in reality was a trunk of treasures of Sahjara’s royal mother, Karmen Kaur, Mr.Thornfield’s former love interest, who married David Lavell, a Company man. Typical of Jane Steele, the fact that Jack Ghosh was no longer “numbered among the living” (Faye 283) least troubled her.

Jane Steele is also critical about Jane Eyre in her abandonment of Edward Rochester upon knowing that he was married even though he loved her so much and was remorseful of the error of not confiding in her about his past. Jane Steele's audacity is intensified through her remark that Jane Eyre had been very impractical at a pivotal point of her life and that she would have "shaken [that] bear's paw" (Faye 288) if Jane Eyre had been devoured by the beast while fleeing penniless and wandering through the wilderness. She observes that leaving Rochester without her share of fortune, her wages included, had been the most idiotic thing Jane Eyre ever did, while the same episode is an acclaimed point of *Jane Eyre*, where critics praise her for uplifting her self-respect and integrity. *Jane Steele*, on the contrary, shows Steele expressing her decision to leave Highgate house for the crime of murder that she committed which for her relief was instantly dismissed by Thornfield. As Faktorovich observes, Faye has clearly studied *Jane Eyre* closely. There are several digressions in the novel where Jane Steele quotes Jane Eyre to reflect on the intentions and implications of the other author whose ideas about life do not match her (57).

Jane Eyre's eventual coming of fortune through the inheritance left to her by her paternal uncle is presented in a different light in *Jane Steele*. Jane Steele feels dejected to learn that she was not who she thought she was. She was the illegitimate daughter of Richard Barbary aka Jonathan Steele, a stockbroker, whom she had mistaken all her life for her uncle, Edwin Barbary's father. She had a hard time coming to terms with the fact that she was not the legitimate heir of the estate and could also justify her aunt Patience Barbary's hatred and contempt towards her

mother. She was however not without any fortune for her father had arranged for an amount of three hundred pounds as a yearly allowance for her subsistence which he had entrusted with his attorney. The amount had added up over the years and she had a relatively good amount to claim at the point making her a rich woman even without "Thornfield's assistance" (Faye 326). At a later point in the novel that goes against conventions, Charles Thornfield, who witnessed the slaughtering of "ten thousand Khalsa men and one woman" (Faye 348) in the Battle of Sobraon is identified as the lunatic and the delirious at Highgate house, rather than a wife he had been hiding. His trauma of lying untreated in a bloodbath with a large wound, "fever visions" and "night terrors" (Faye 349) led to the development of his aversion to touch. According to Augustus Sack, Thornfield was "madder than a full march moon" and "never fully recovered" (Faye 350). The novel exposes Mrs. Garima Kaur to be another blood monger who apparently killed Company men, David Lavell for betraying Karmen Kaur, and John Clements for the threat he posed to Sardar Singh, whom she loved secretly. The author's earlier note of advice to her readers not to indulge in murders for love is a clear foreshadowing of the deeds of two prominent female murderers of her narrative who slay men not in war but outside it. The novel is wrapped up in a joyful tone with Jane Steele and Charles Thornfield married to each other some years after she "began sharing [his] bed" (Faye 413), a clear contrast to the Victorian morality held up by *Jane Eyre*'s characters who sought for the licence "to become one flesh without delay" (Brontë, 514) and married one another three days after Jane Eyre's return. When the novel closes, Jane Steele commences a life "spiced with murder and intrigue" (Faye 413), alongside the man she loved. Through her world, Faye has reimagined a Jane who is

vigilante, big hearted, knife wielding, and unwilling to suffer tyrants or fools alongside a convincing and vivid portrait of nineteenth century England. Jane Steele is portrayed as an egalitarian soul who has no serious objection to carnal and worldly pleasures, riches, expensive clothes, drinks, large mansion, rich estate, and a brooding Byronic hero.

Science fiction is a popular genre that imagines life in certain scientific premises, such as artificial intelligence, other planet inhabitation, and time travel. Science fiction, beyond doubt, is one of the most creative genres in literature. Sci-fi novels transport readers to multiverses, distant galaxies, underwater habitats, and other bizarre worlds. They are mostly set in the future and explore concepts like time and space travel, teleportation, multiverses, and deal with the consequences of scientific and technological advancements. Readers on their adventures are introduced to otherworldly characters and their technologies.

Sharon Shinn's *Jenna Starborn* (2002) is a brilliant new twist on the classic story of *Jane Eyre.* Shinn is an American novelist known for her novels that club science fiction, fantasy, and adventure. Her other notable works are *Archangels*, *Troubled Waters*, and *Mystic and Rider*. Shinn imagines Jane Eyre in an alternate universe wherein she goes by the name Jenna Starborn, who is an orphan, outcast, half citizen but talented and smart. The protagonist Jenna Starborn is presented as a baby harvested in the gen-tanks on a different planet, scorned by her own family yet bold enough to seek her own way. It is a genre blend of science fiction and gothic

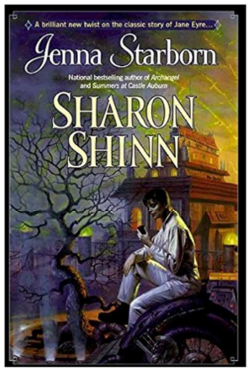


Fig 2.3 Cover photo of *Jenna Starborn*

romance and an “intriguing take” for Brontë fans who are willing to experiment with genres. (Shinn, Sharon. Jenna Starborn, 5-08-2011) The novel is a science fiction of great calibre that explores the possibilities of space travel, other universes, and other life forms. It even takes the form of a space opera that is placed in outer space and centres around romance, conflict, adventure, fortune, and family tensions. The peculiarities of the sci-fi narrative commence with Shinn’s observations on the very nature in which Jenna was born on the planet named Baldus. With the search for another hospitable planet in fashion, science fiction makes living on other planets look easy. They present aliens in worlds that are earth-like with exotic life forms, with weaker gravity and different suns. (Wood 59)

Jenna’s birth was executed through a commissioned conception by Sophia Rentley, who paid for her gestation and claimed her after the process of harvesting. Though Aunt Rentley had created Jenna to fill in the void in her existence, Jenna was soon unwelcome and became a symbol of things people pay for but no longer want, who was rather undesirable because of her thin frame and dark complexion. Jenna felt like an outsider after the birth of Jerret, Aunt Rentley’s biological son. Her position in the household, like Jane Eyre’s, was lesser than family and better than servants not because of what she was but because of the way in which she was conceived and born. Aunt Rentley had a repulsion towards synthetics and a marked aversion for cyborgs. She used commissioned conception as a last resort to make a baby and immediately rejected it when she conceived “naturally" with the aid of an “artificial womb” (Shinn 4). Jenna’s low societal status on the Allegiance, the planetary system in which she lives, arose due to Aunt Rentley’s reluctance to adopt

her as her legal daughter, which was inevitable for a citizenship. Jenna thus was deemed a half citizen with the only three options to become a citizen: being born or adopted into a rank, to marry into one or to buy one for yourself (Shinn 5). Jenna, who was unlucky with the first one, and found the other two options less promising, contemplated a lifetime of half citizenship. Half-cits, as half citizens were called, were allowed to work though they could not own extensive property, could marry but were strongly discouraged from procreating. The sci-fi counterpart to our present-day internet is the StellarNet which connects inhabitants of different planets together. The Egalitarian philosophy of earth is juxtaposed with the PanEquist philosophy of Allegiance, with Jenna being its avid supporter. Jenna became a proponent of the philosophy mainly because of her inferior status and invisibility which was facilitated by the manner of her creation for which she was not at fault. At the heart of the PanEquist doctrine is the recognition that no species is superior to the other and that all are equal throughout the system. *Jenna Starborn* is unique in exposing Aunt Rentley's maltreatment of Jenna set against most adaptations which routinely and conveniently follow setting up the aunt as necessarily insensitive, callous and at times evil but also as someone whose status is never at stake. Aunt Rentley, to a reader's satisfaction, is chided by social workers and lawyers for routinely abusing Jenna with evidence of her "broken bones that are not rightly set", untreated "childhood diseases", recent "internal damage to stomach", and "historical malnourishment" (Shinn 14). To feed, clothe and prevent Jenna from being a drain on society and to make her a professional rather than a petty criminal or charity case, it is decided upon by the authorities to send her away to a government funded institution that would enable her to learn a career and let her lead a productive life.

Jenna's life changes for the better with her admission into Lora Technical and Engineering Academy, which though not luxurious, was a comfortable place to live and learn on another planet, Lora, where she was trained to be a solo engineer and tech support personnel on "frontier planets, space stations, and starships" (Shinn 25).

Helen Burn's death in *Jane Eyre* owing to consumption is regarded as one of the greatest tragedies in Jane Eyre's life after she was orphaned. Jenna experiences a similar tragedy with the death of her dearest friend, Harriet Fairlawn, who succumbed to radiations while attempting to fix a Delta Five fission reactor. Having spent eight years at Lora, Jenna eventually joined the institution as an instructor. At the age of twenty-five, Jenna decides to apply for the post of a generator technician at the outpost holding at Thorrastone Park, on planet Fieldstar, "a small, terraformed planet in the Kaybek system, far enough from the nearest sun to require independent energy sources" (Shinn 32). Thornfield in Brontë is set against Thorrastone, on a somewhat isolated planet whose poisonous atmosphere is stabilised by science, governed by two generators that require constant maintenance with the potential threat of "breakdown" (Shinn 36) and "little glitches" (Shinn 37), foreshadowing the tragedy that would befall on Thorrastone Park with the progression of the plot. Citizenship and societal status are crucial points in Shinn's narrative. On Fieldstar, Jenna encounters a group of miners who were not even half citizens and held no class at all, ostracised and marginalised from the rest of the society. Thorrastone's housekeeper Mrs. Farraday advises Jenna to cut down her empathy and not to associate with people below one's own class. Thorrastone's master, Everett Ravenbeck was a level one citizen with a great fortune and the right to travel

anywhere he chooses, with a “cosmopolitan outlook” (Shinn 39) on life, characterised as kind, and intelligent. Shinn presents a twist in her retelling through the introduction of a new character, Janet Ayerson, the tutor of Ravenbeck’s ward, Ameletta. This is a rather interesting point in the novel where Shinn chooses to confuse the reader who the actual Jane Eyre counterpart is, opening the possibility of other fictional worlds again. Janet Ayerson is presented as a tutor who with her “sober face, did nothing so energetic” (Shinn 43). Jenna describes her as undoubtedly “half cit”, “severely dressed”, “plain featured”, “younger than myself”, who bore all “unmistakable signs of poverty, hardship, and a determination to make her way in a not entirely hospitable world” (Shinn 44). These descriptions are in perfect alignment with Brontë’s characterisation of Jane Eyre. For the reader, the possibility of Ravenbeck having a wife he hid somewhere comes out with Jenna encountering a mysterious employee, Gilda Parenon, who in Mr. Farraday’s words does a “specialized” job (Shinn 50), who supposedly is the counterpart of Grace Poole who was trusted with the care of the mad Bertha Mason. Rochester and Jane’s first encounter in which Rochester falls from his horse is reimagined as an aeromobile accident with Ravenbeck’s vehicle bouncing against a nearly invisible wall and shuddering to a halt with Jenna in the vicinity.

Janet Ayerson’s statement to Ameletta that “it is not attractive to be so desperate over any man’s attention, even that of your guardian” (Shinn 76) and her own elopement with Joseph Luxton, a first-class citizen contradicts her character but speaks volumes about Jenna Starborn, free willed and independent who chose to pay for her wedding dress by herself and backed out of the marriage upon knowing

Ravenbeck's past. Jenna saving Ravenbeck from poisoning due to reactor failure is the sci-fi version of Jane saving Rochester's life from the fire Bertha kindled. Shinn's novel cleverly parodies the episode of Blanche Ingram and the extravagant house party that Rochester hosted at Thornfield in which "half citizens and less desirable residents would be present but invisible" (115) reinforcing class divide even on this distant planet. Shinn introduces Bianca Ingersoll and a couple of other house guests at Thorrastone, the first-class citizens who were held at great esteem by the other members of the society. Ravenbeck is also presented as a benevolent person who in Janet Ayerson's words believes it a treat for half-cits and others to be allowed to "socialise with citizens as equals" (Shinn 119). Set in a futuristic world there indeed is no dearth of any facility or option in the narrative, Shinn foreshadows the possibility of Ravenbeck's final disfigurement like Rochester's blindness and handicap. Mrs. Ingersoll refers to spa-surgical facilities in Roberson, Hapeton, Brierly and other places, where all sorts of cosmetic treatments are done with no visible traces of past disfigurement or damage (Shinn 111). Jenna's assertion that she is an independent woman who wishes not to rely on Ravenbeck even after their marriage is an honest depiction of the characterisation of Brontë's Jane who was at discomfort with her cheeks burning "with a sense of discomfort and annoyance" (Brontë 309) when Rochester pressured her to buy fancy clothes and precious ornaments. While recollecting her shopping experience at Millcote, Jane contemplates on her independence and disapproval to doll up for her future husband. Jenna on the other hand was verbal about the affair and states that she will remain an independent woman and not a dependent bride who would be responsible for herself in matters concerning money, emotions, and spirituality (Shinn 229).

The predictable final revelation of the novel is that Everet Ravenbeck is a married man with a wife still living. His wife, Beatrice Merrick happens to be a malfunctioning cyborg, a part-human, part android with flaws routinely "deprogrammed and cannibalised for parts" whose only crime was "uncontrollable madness" (Shinn 251). A hybrid of human and machine, the cyborg is a representative for the boundary of corporeality being transcended (Margau 31). Shinn's Jenna is a strong-willed woman who denies being Ravenbeck's mistress as she was unwilling to throw away her life as she believes that she was "worth more than a rich man's whim" (267) and therefore unwilling to proceed with a relationship with Mr. Ravenbeck in confidence. What mattered to her was her honour, integrity, and survival. Suspended animation as a science fiction trope is introduced at this point in the novel where Jenna, with her tortured soul and low credit status, "without conscious volition" (277) joins a crew headed to Appalachia, a distant place in the galaxy, in which all passengers are strapped in their seats and asleep for nearly a year. Passengers might turn corpses from system malfunction, insufficient nutrition, quasi starvation, illness, or brain damage.

Even in the real scientific world of our times, keeping astronauts mentally and physically in good shape throughout the duration of the journey is challenging as in a torpor many physiological activities are reduced resulting in the decrease of metabolism, body temperature, heart rate, and respiration to a fraction of their normal rate. (Chouker, 819) At the end of the journey, the crew had a hard time waking Jenna from her catatonic state as her brain has sustained much emotional trauma. Jenna stumbles upon the Raineys, later revealed to be her cousins, in

Appalachia at the Public Aid Office. They run a service that offers help to people who are not instantly prepared to take up the rhythms of a new life in Appalachia. Jenna with her transferable skills soon found herself at ease at her new environment and bonded even strongly with the Raineys upon realising that they practised Pan Equist philosophy. Shinn characterises Sinclair Rainey as a coloniser, ambitious in nature, who desires to be a pioneer who "tame(s) unconquered land", to create a "personal empire" purely through his will (314), soon to leave for Cozakee, a recently surveyed, hospitable planet which has been just opened for "colonisation" (332). He fancies himself to be a missionary whose very presence would be the first mark of civilisation on the planet and be the vanguard of humanity.

The paradox of character is central to Sinclair who imagines himself to be a coloniser, who spoke of the "advantages of homesteading", "exhilaration of wrestling a new life out of a foreign soil", and "creating an empire from an empty, unused world", and a philanthropist running a social services office at the same time. Brontë's St. John also wanted to be a missionary in India to civilise its barbaric population, in clear alignment with the idea of the "white man's burden" (Kipling 311-12). Jenna inherits a great fortune through lottery from the founder of the clinic of the genetic tanks at Baldus, who died wealthy and childless. Jenna decides to split up the amount with her "cousins" (319) Deborah, Maria, and Sinclair, who are also revealed to have been harvested at Baldus, aspiring to shed their half-cit status and purchase their citizenship. Sinclair's blind ambition and sheer lack of romantic love led Jenna to turn down his proposal of marriage, an institution which according to Sinclair would sanction two unchaperoned people "falling into habits of physical

intimacy" (337). The resonation of the Victorian morality of *Jane Eyre* in a science fiction novel set in a world of opportunities in futuristic time is unconvincing. *Jenna Starborn* ends with Jenna returning to the mutilated and blinded Mr. Ravenbeck and eventually marrying him. To repair the damage that Ravenbeck had sustained, at the occasion of the compromise of the force field of Fieldstar by Ravenbeck's cyborg wife, he had to incorporate synthetics into his body. *Jenna Starborn* can rightly be referred to as a *Jane Eyre* adaptation of great merit wherein the novelist has created a different fictional world of its own right in a convincing manner.

Sexual desire and its expression in art and literature is not a recent phenomenon. Readers have witnessed the free publication of erotica in times of sexual liberation which was later ushered into backrooms in changing times of censorious judgement. Despite the ebb and flow of cultural attitudes, erotic literature serves as a tool to elevate sex to an art form worthy of recognition which offers sexual gratification to interested readers across cultures.

In *Love in the Western World*, Dennis De Rougemont distinguishes between sexuality and eroticism. He defines sexuality as the instinct that "directs the individual to the objectives of the species" (6), while eroticism is the sexual pleasure for its own sake not meant for procreation. While *Jane Eyre* was composed in an age of religious restrictions and taboos on sex for passion rather than procreation, its erotic progenies were all born in the times credited for "liberated love" (6).

Erotica is mostly an outlet for our most naturally occurring impulses while it also characterises a defiant rebellion against social rules. Lyn Avery Hunt discusses the seventeenth century frankness when sexual practices had little "secrecy" and

"tolerant familiarity" with the illicit (10). Foucault describes a time when sexuality was "a time of direct gestures, shameless discourse, and open transgressions" which was compromised to a "serious function of reproduction" with the emergence of the Victorian bourgeoise class (3). Sexuality outside the house and out of conjugal relationship began to be defined as obscene and a matter of social concern. The world of *Jane Eyre* has been identified by authors and critics as a world of sexual desires, repressions, and outlets. Sandra Gilbert remarks that when she read *Jane Eyre* a second time as a teenager, she was delighted by the "illicit glamour of the romance between Charlotte Brontë's "poor, plain, little" governess and her brooding master (Gilber 352). E-readers offer anonymity to the readers and save them from the embarrassment of the displayed titles and covers. With the growing popularity of e-readers, erotic fiction has seen a dramatic revival in the recent years. *Jane Eyre Laid Bare*, *Jane Eyrotica*, and *Mr. Rochester: British Bad Boy* are three notable texts which are the erotic mashups and retellings of Brontë's classic. The original text is expanded and contrasted with its major and minor characters having sexual encounters.

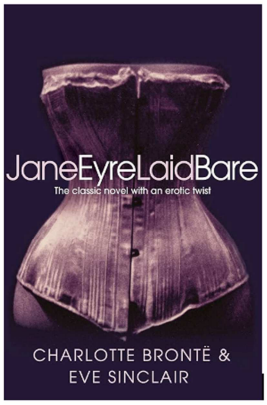


Fig 2.4 Cover photo of *Jane Eyre Laid Bare*

Eve Sinclair's *Jane Eyre Laid Bare* (2012) is overtly sexual, employing sexual fantasies of the protagonist, homo-erotic dominance, and submission with some deviations from the original text as well. Sinclair is an English novelist, copywriter, editor, and journalist who fell in love with the works of Brontë and Austen at an early age. Owing to the stigma associated with erotic fiction and women authors in the trade, not much is known about her life and other works.

The book's publisher Wayne Brooks of Pan Macmillan opines that the text is a work of genius which gives the original "an exciting and enticing erotic make-over" (Jane Eyre gets erotic, 14th June 2012). Sinclair attempts to release the smouldering sexual tension between Jane and her employer which has vexed readers through the centuries. Her novel was built on the dark, repressed eroticism already contained in the original novel. Sinclair removes the novel's opening sections about Jane's family and school life to get immediately to her heroine's arrival as an 18-year-old governess at Thornfield Hall. Sinclair skips the beginning bits of the novel where Jane is a desperate orphan at Lowood school but introduces a new character, her lesbian partner, Emma Wilby, with whom she had formed a "deep attachment" (9), through recollections of their intimate moments. Drawing evidence from the novel that includes Jane Eyre's description of other women around her right from her childhood, along with the sketches that she drew, Deborah Denenholz Morse, in "Brontë Violations: Liminality, Transgression, and Lesbian Erotics in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*", argues that Jane Eyre's most insistent passion is lesbian. She contends that the most probable reason why only a few scholars have engaged in the queer reading of the text is the undue focus on the heterosexual passion and the marriage plot between Jane and Rochester (3). Moreover, Brontë scholarship based on biographical perspective and feminism also has discouraged erotic explorations on same-sex friendship. However, it is hard to rule out investigations on lesbian erotics in the novel based on such emphasis. Sinclair's Jane does not shy away from carnal pleasures and indulges in all acts of sexual pleasure and release without hesitation. The original plot line remains the same for the rest of the novel which includes Jane and Rochester's first encounter, the fire in Rochester's room, the

exuberant ball at Thornfield, and the unsuccessful wedding but each episode is loaded with erotic elements. Jane is ravenous for “more practical experience than [she] possessed” and wanted “more intercourse” with her kind and the opposite within and outside of Thornfield (Sinclair 29). Unlike the sombre abode in Brontë, Sinclair’s version of Mr. Rochester's home is filled with sexually suggestive paintings and lascivious servants and guests. The third storey walls of Thornfield offered her a deep satisfaction as they were lined with “lascivious art” (Sinclair 44) in the form of paintings, murals, and tapestries depicting couples with their carnal desires bared. Jane harbours desire for Adele’s nurse, Sophie and wishes she was inclined to her as Emma was. Jane masturbates often at night for relaxation, fantasies sex with people in the household and in paintings, puts herself in the place of Rochester’s French mistress, Celine Varens, and even imagines a threesome between herself, Celine, and Rochester. Despite reimagining *Jane Eyre* with all the sex that it lacked; Sinclair carries forward the rhetoric of Rochester’s benevolent racism as Brontë had presented it in *Jane Eyre*. Adele continues to be referred to as the “genuine daughter of Paris” (Sinclair 64) who Rochester rescues from the “slime and mud of Paris” and transplants to England to grow up “clean in the wholesome soil of the English country garden” (Sinclair 86). Jane and Rochester kiss for the first time in Brontë only after Rochester proposes to her in the garden and she gladly accepts it. However, they get to kiss much earlier in Sinclair’s after Jane rescues Rochester from the fire. Jane is presented as unwilling to confine her romantic relationship to furtive or meaningful glances or holding hands, who unlike Jane Eyre in Brontë could not find “enough reason or willpower” (Sinclair 102) to resist Rochester. The ball at Thornfield is portrayed as an orgy in disguise. After

accidentally onlooking lesbian sexual encounters of servants at Thornfield, Jane is also seen musing over her seemingly forbidden secret lesbian relationship and comes to the conviction that the same is a "common practice in society as a whole" (Sinclair 149). She remarks that the conventions of the society she lived in were stifling and rigid (Sinclair 163). This observation is valid when read along the practice of some solemn puritans whose decency codes extended beyond human beings to even furniture that they covered the legs of a pianoforte as it was not proper for even a piano to "display its nude limps" (Lott 93-94). Though Sinclair explores the physical intimacy of Jane and Rochester in detail, it is at the expense of the emotional chemistry between the characters. Bertha Mason's madness is also linked to her sexual orientation. Bertha is presented as a dominatrix, to whom Rochester is submissive. Rochester's love for Jane and his desire to marry her were his attempts to escape his sexually dominant wife and to further establish his dominance in the act. Sinclair's narrative ends with an element of surprise with Jane Eyre's decision to leave Rochester for good as she felt betrayed by Rochester who feigned love to her while attempting to "train her" (308), "strip her of her innocence" (308) and hand her over to Bertha as she had instructed him to do. The novel comes to end with the line "Reader, I left him" (322) opposed to "Reader, I married him" (517) in Brontë.

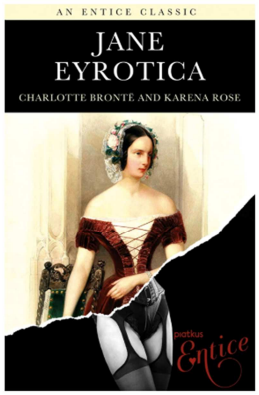


Fig 2.5 Cover photo of *Jane Eyrotica*

Surprisingly true to the actual plot line, Karena Rose amuses the readers with an erotic rendition of Brontë's Victorian classic. Karena Rose is supposedly a young

English novelist who writes under different aliases. In *Jane Eyrotica* (2012), Rose greatly compromises the character of Jane Eyre presenting her as an amorous woman and describing her sexual encounters with her cousin, her employer, and other male characters. *Jane Eyrotica* also has a changed timeline with reference to *Jane Eyre*, and Rose conveniently omits Jane's troubled childhood, and the trauma of her orphan state in a rush to detail her sexual endeavours. Jane is sixteen when the novel begins, sexually active with her exploitative and callous cousin, John Reed, and preoccupied by the portrait of an unknown man with penetrating dark eyes and enticing features. She is taken over by carnal pleasures and silently endures the wavering insult and lust of John Reed at Gateshead. Jane is portrayed as sensuous and lustful with multiple sexual partners unlike Brontë's virtuous Jane with saint-like morality. The candid portrayal of sexual relationship, questioning of ideas of morality and virtue, the amorous heroine, and depiction of the heroine's multiple sex partners are set against the regressive morality of the Victorian times. Rose's novel manipulates time and events to subvert the historical misrepresentation of female sexuality in white patriarchal culture, the Lowood constraints that clinged to Jane "controlling" her features, "muffling" her voice and "restricting" her limbs (Rose, 119). Brontë's Jane is presented as a woman of strong principles despite her poverty-stricken and miserable childhood and Mr. Brocklehurst of Lowood serves as the puritan agent who serves to "mortify the lusts of flesh" (Rose, 53) of the girls at Lowood while Jane's waking hours were consumed by her desire for her dark eyed lover. Jane is presented as sensible and practical to reject John Reed upon realising that they never loved each other and hesitating to elope with Jack, the stable boy, as she was determined to get the education she had come to Lowood for. Jane's initial

meeting with Rochester is spiced up with sex, immediately after Rochester sights Jane after his horse collapses. Jane's relationship with Mr. Rochester, which is infused with the romantic tone of the original, also carries earlier hints as to her taste for BDSM (bondage and discipline, dominance and submission, sadism, and masochism). BDSM refers to a range of sexual behaviours that include "an implicit or explicit erotic power exchange" (Carlstorm, 209) involving bondage, submission, sadism, and masochism. Sadomasochistically oriented behaviours include physically restrictive acts (handcuffs, straitjackets, chains, ropes), pain creating actions (skin branding, caning, spanking), enemas, catheters, anal fisting, and scatological practices (Alison, 258). Sadomasochism (SM) has always been treated as criminal behaviour, mental illness, sexual taboo, and a sign of sexual freedom. The language used to denote the subculture has varied from SM to BDSM which incorporates a broader range of interests and activities (Rogak, 454). Studies have demonstrated that these practices are prevalent among the general population. In fact, the publication of the popular erotic romance novel, *Fifty Shades of Grey* (2011) by E. L. James that featured dominant models of mainstream pornography has also been linked to the increase in rope sales, sex toys and sex toy related injuries in America (Herbenick, 3). Jane Eyre is seen to feel "completely in control" (130) at times and tied up to the bedsteads by curtain ties and blindfolded (175-76) the other times, highlighting the erotics of power in the novel. Jane Eyre, at the end of the ordeals she goes through regarding her marriage and discovery of Rochester's mad wife, eventually returns to Thornfield, and marries her master.

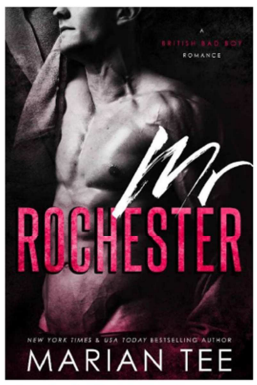


Fig 2.6 Cover photo of *Mr. Rochester: British Bad Boy*

Marian Tee's *Mr. Rochester: British Bad Boy* is a loose adaptation of *Jane Eyre*. The story is set in the present times in the hackneyed trope of a billionaire boss and secretary romance with steamy sex-scenes and a happily ever after climax. Tee is a Filipino Chinese author who drifted into the realm of steamy rom-coms and tear-jerker happily ever-afters. She has also penned a range of erotic novels like *The Greek Billionaire and His Secretary*, *The Werewolf Prince and I*, and *My Dutch Billionaire*. In *Mr. Rochester: British Bad Boy*, Tee's protagonist Mary Jane, uses the name Jane Eyre to hide her identity on a private platform for secretaries and personal assistants (PA), is Constantin Rochester's newly appointed PA, and is just out of college with a sizable student loan she is bound to repay. She prefers to be referred to as Ms. Reed, an allusion to Jane Eyre's childhood home. She is portrayed as a masochist, rude and irritable, who swears and gets into scuffles, has rivals, and with a fetish for anything masculine. She gets easily lost in daydreams of her employer's caresses and their subsequent lovemaking. Her masochist nature finds Constantin Rochester's sadism and aggression pleasurable. She immediately gives in to her boss's advances, secretly longs for more and confronts her shameful memories later. She does not appear to have a romantic connection with her "irritating" and "know-it-all" (Tee, 47) boss. Anger and arousal serve to be Mary Jane's dominant emotions in Rochester's company as she is "either angry… or aroused" (Tee, 97) by everything her boss says or does. She is described as a type of girl who is sexually passionate and as someone who would deliberately provoke a man to invite his attention, set against Jane Eyre who would "walk softly" so that she can "slip away unnoticed" (Brontë, 287) by Rochester or any other man. She would not even hesitate to attempt to slap a man who would leave her "unfulfilled"

(Tee, 65). Mary Jane displays great servitude to Rochester by obeying his orders, and pretending to disobey him so that she could hear him order her around.

Sandra M. Gilbert in "Jane Eyre and the secrets of furious lovemaking" admits that in her teens she wanted Jane Eyre to run away with Rochester to the south of France or "even indeed to the moon" (355). She observes that for most readers, the "radical weakness" in an otherwise politically correct and talented Brontë would be the "deep longing" of a woman's "lonely heart" for the "brute, / Brute heart of a brute like" man (355). Gilbert's rigorous repression of her own desire for Jane and Rochester's "furious lovemaking" is shared by most readers, who on the contrary are presented with the heroine's new political position and life as a village school mistress (386). It is on this romantic and sexual climax which the author conveniently suppresses that authors like Rose, Tee and Sinclair build their erotic empires. Gilbert observes that Brontë's novel broods intently on the mysteries of male and female sexuality and eroticism and transcribes the fantasies of both sexes. For most readers, *Jane Eyre* is a tale on the perils and possibilities of sexual passion in a phantasmagoric fashion. Gilbert relies on Elaine Showalter's observation of sex in *Jane Eyre*. Pertaining to her discussion on women writers, Elaine Showalter observes that a "strain of intense female sexual fantasy and eroticism runs through [even] the first four chapters of the novel [*Jane Eyre*] and contributes to their extraordinary and thrilling immediacy" (Showalter 115) (Gilbert, 357). Gilbert examines the language of the text to underline Rochester's discomfort in addressing Bertha's sexuality and eroticism that "stimulated," "excited," and "besotted" him (Brontë, 352) at first and turned him into a "gross, grovelling, mole-eyed blockhead" (Brontë, 352) thereafter. Rochester's confession that the "impure,

depraved" nature of his foreign, beastly, and madly sexual wife is still "a part of me" (Brontë,352) can be read along his erotic adventures with a series of mistresses in foreign lands. While desire and sexuality in the Victorian society in *Jane Eyre* is maddening for women, it is debilitating and contagious to men. *Jane Eyre* in Gilbert's words, "investigates the problem that even closely guarded wishes for such lovemaking posed to both sexes in Victorian society" (365).

Brontë's novel represents the social enforcements which subordinate women's sexuality, which, if not properly regulated could turn women into beasts with insatiable and deadly sexual hunger. The authors of *Jane Eyre*'s erotic renditions are bent on extricating Jane from her social conditioning on sexual desires and behaviours. Some readers of erotica might find the contents of these books titillating and enjoyable, fans of mashups might find the whole exercise of creating a sexually adventurous Jane Eyre intriguing, while fans of the original who respect Jane for her sense of morality and principles might be truly offended by these endeavours whose sexual graphic derivatives undermine the original work. Mary Ann Davis in "'On the Extreme Brink' with Charlotte Brontë: Revisiting Jane Eyre's Erotics of Power" observes that retellings that magnify the sexual dynamics of Jane Eyre fail to capture the compelling combination of the first-person narrative of the principal novel and most pornographic renditions instead focus on creating a general parallel to the events of *Jane Eyre* (116). Jane Eyre's emblematic journey to self- sufficiency and independence hardly finds a way into any of these narratives. As Louisa Yates observes, "sex…certainly sells" (258) and so would our pleasure in consuming reimagined, reinterpreted, revised, rewritten and rescreened Victorian classics.

Gothic Romances, a genre of novels, are novels that are most open to the charge of providing the reader with dangerous distractions and which combine the mysteries of the past, bloody crimes, family secrets, dark villains, and exotic locales. In gothic romances, women are mostly distracted from their proper devotion to their family duties and often drawn in by narratives that "encourage foolish idealism and unjustified paranoia," giving them false ideas about the nature of reality in eighteenth-century England (Pearson 199). These were novels of strong emotions and startling scenes of fear and suffering. Most of these narratives conclude with the restoration of order or the marriage with the right partners. The secrets that are revealed during the romance through the efforts of the heroine were often disturbing and sinister.

It is interesting to note that vampire stories have become a genre that fascinates a range of readers, while the younger readers find it particularly attractive. Though there was no dearth of vampires in European folklore and oral traditions, the genre acquired considerable momentum with the publication of John Polidori's *The Vampyre* in 1821. In *Blood Thirst:100 Years of Vampire Fiction*, Leonard Wolf identifies *Varney the Vampyre* (1847), long attributed to Thomas Preskett Prest but written by James Malcolm Rymer, as the next notable vampire in English literature (Wolf, 5). Over the past few years, vampire fiction has started to operate on a grand scale. The vampire has become a cultural icon of the western society and finds its way quite easily into contemporary literature. Prior to the literature of the 20th century, they were treated as unrepenting monsters who threatened the innocent and tested the courageous and the brave. Ever since *Dracula* (1897), there has been a proliferation of narratives of vampire hunters like Van Helsing, trying to stop the

seemingly “unstoppable menace of the undying Count” (Wolf**,** 11). Vampires are excessively used in films, serials, novels, advertisements, cartoons, music, games, and television shows. Vampire, as a supernatural entity, has existed for thousands of years with its references in oral stories, myths, and legends (Hawkes, 80). Vampire fiction functions on certain conventions based on cultural knowledge, that were passed on from pioneering texts like Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and is however not resistant to change over time. That the Count wears black, lives in a castle, is surrounded by bats, has fangs, wears a cape, and has no reflections are examples of the conventions of the representation of vampires that hark back to the superstitious times they were created. In Gelder’s opinion, though the vampire’s nature is fundamentally conservative, culturally it may be highly adaptable that it can be made to appeal to or generate fundamental urges located somehow ‘beyond’ culture (desire, anxiety, fear), while simultaneously, it can stand for a range of meanings and positions in culture. As Gelder explains, it is this simultaneity at work here that explains why the vampire has lived so long (141). Romances involving humans, vampires and werewolves have become a staple of goth-chick-lit fiction of our times. While vampires and zombies are walking corpses, they are intrinsically unhealthy and against nature. Werewolves, on the contrary are perfectly natural, “alive and kicking” (Film & Music, 7).

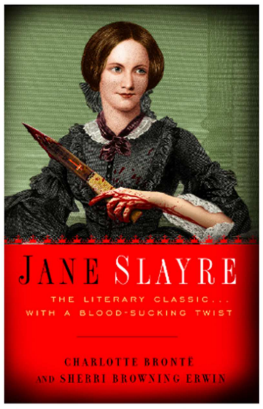


Fig 2.7 Cover photo of *Jane Slayre*

Sherri Browning Erwin transforms Brontë’s masterpiece into a spooky and eerie paranormal adventure characterising Jane Slayre as a courageous orphan who slays detestable vampires. Parodic fiction or mashups, as they are generally referred to in

popular culture, is a combination of well-known and celebrated classic texts and elements from popular fiction such as science fiction, or horror. Erwin is an American novelist best known for her literary mashups, historical and contemporary fiction with paranormal twists like *Jane Slayre*, *Grave Expectations*, *Once Wicked*, and *Thornbrook Park*. *Jane Slayre* (2010) is a menagerie of blood-thirsty, flesh-eating, savage creatures on the loose plaguing nineteenth century English society. In the process of adaptation, much of the novel's original plot remains intact with Erwin making changes in its superficial elements such as character, details, looks and interests. Like Jane Eyre, Jane Slayre takes up a job as a governess and is thereby exposed to the mysteries of her employer's life and mansion. Jane is brought up in a vampire household with the Reeds, who do not prey on her as she was of "common blood" (Erwin, 8). The Reeds were of the conviction that consuming the blood of the commons would bring on fevers and apoplexy and hence Jane's low birth status safeguarded her from being devoured by her aunt and cousins. She was kept away from sunlight as sunlight is a popularised weakness of vampires. Jane eventually learns that she is of the Slayre blood and is destined to slay unearthly creatures or abominations as only death can reunite them with their mortal souls. She seeks to formally initiate her training as a slayer and her years at Lowood school offer her the right chance for true experience. Mr. Brokorhurst takes in Jane to his boarding facility at Lowood. Jane grows increasingly suspicious of Brokorhurst's "special students" (Erwin, 63) who lacked the fire and spark of life as well as original thoughts and creative impulses. It is later revealed that they were zombies commissioned by Brokorhurst, who was also a voodoo priest (a type of sorcerer who reanimates corpses for indentured servitude) and kept away from meat to serve as

his loyal servants. Jane slays the zombies by decapacitating them to send their souls to heaven and frees them from the doom that had befallen them. Jane tackles more vampires after she joins Thornfield as Adele's governess. She rescues Rochester from being eaten alive by three vampires and identifies the vampire among Rochester's guests thereby saving the whole household. She grows suspicious of Grace Poole as an entity from the third storey who seems to plague Rochester but fails to arrive at a definite conclusion regarding Grace Poole's corporeal identity. The novel follows the same event progression of *Jane Eyre* that Jane eventually finds out about the prisoner at Thornfield, who in this case happens to be Rochester's werewolf wife. Werewolves are creatures cursed to transform from humans to wolfs under the glow of the moon. Bertha Mason gets infected with the condition in West Indies by her werewolf lover. The infestation, added to the prevailing madness that ran in her blood, made her beastly, forcing Rochester to shut her away from the rest of the world. After her broken engagement with Rochester, Jane leaves Thornfield, slays even more monsters to finally unite with her cousins, the Rivers, who were slayers like herself. Through long hours of arduous training, she perfects the art of slaying, avidly consumes literature on monsters and how to subdue them, and even discovers a cure for werewolf infestation in one of her uncles' books. As in the original, Jane turns down St. John's request to join him on his mission to India, whose vampire population was growing unchecked, and pursues Rochester instead. She learns that Bertha died in the fire she set the castle on and managed to bite Rochester before she was consumed by the flames. Rochester is transformed into a werewolf, as he could not take the Italian antidote to werewolf poisoning soon enough and leads a hellish life thereafter. Hope is rekindled when

Jane Slayre returns with the cure and buries him after tethering his feet with silver chains and administering the potion. After the magic of the potion had worked its way into Rochester's body, the wolf was driven straight out of him.

Vampires are even invading the superhero genre with a greater number of novels, movies, and series made on them, Sony, and Marvel's *Morbius* (2022) to cite a recent example. However, with the proliferation of classics with added gore and gut, a trend inaugurated by Sethe Grahame Smith with his *Pride and Prejudice and Zombie* (2009), the genre has been becoming increasingly tiring and mundane like Erwin's zombies who lacked original thoughts or creative impulses. While Erwin is optimistic that owing to the bulk of literary classics available for mash-ups, the genre has a long way to go before it exhausts, Smith believes that though there is still life left for the genre, it is not bound to last long. (Memmot, 1) Erwin's attempt to transform *Jane Eyre* into "a literary classic with a blood sucking twist", as the subtitle reads, is bound to make fans of the vampire and supernatural excited.

Elizabeth Gaskell's biography of her friend, published in 1857, titled *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, is perhaps the most influential record of Charlotte Brontë's life. Written at the request of Charlotte's father, Patrick Brontë, the biography is a carefully curated document on Brontë that toned down some sensitive issues of the author's life such as the grim living condition of her boarding school that eventually led to the death of her siblings, and also suppressed some other details like Charlotte Brontë's love for her teacher, Mr. Heger. Lyndal Gordon's biography of Charlotte Brontë titled, *Charlotte Brontë: A Passionate Life* (1994) questions the passionless, dutiful image of Brontë, as presented by Gaskell. Gordon's biography looks beyond

the images of the modest Victorian lady to explore the gaps in the author's life, her desires, conflicts, and ambitions.

While *Jane Eyre* is widely accepted as a fictional autobiography that traces the life of a fictional character, which is loosely based on the author's real-life experiences, Sheila Kohler's *Becoming Jane Eyre* is an example of an autobiographical fiction that explores the process of creation of a narrative world in the mind and imagination of its author. Hans Vandervoode, in his *Handbook of Autobiography/Autofiction* distinguishes between the terms fictional autobiography and autobiographical fiction:

> One could say that a fictional autobiography and an autobiographical novel are both novels, yet in the first case the autobiographical character of the text refers to the representational frame of it; the story recounts somebody's life and tells about the psychological, social and moral development of the protagonist. In the second case, the autobiographical aspect concerns the content of the story, which is to a larger or lesser degree referentially bound to the life of the author. (Vandervoode, 603)

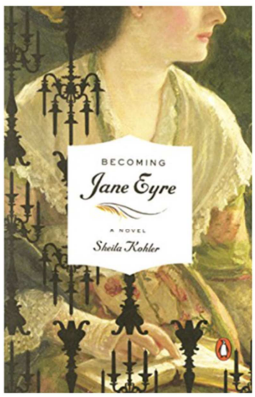


Fig 2.8 Cover photo of *Becoming Jane Eyre*

Kohler is a South African novelist living in the United States whose famous works include *Cracks*, *Crossways*, *The Bay of Foxes*, *Open Secrets* and *Dreaming for Freud*. Full of exquisite details, Kohler's novel fictionalises Brontë's composition of *Jane Eyre* (1847) at a period of internal

conflict in the author's life. She spotlights the frustrations of the headstrong, smart, strong-willed, talented, and ambitious Brontë in an oppressive and class- conscious nineteenth century. It is an intimate and thoughtful account of Charlotte Brontë's life from the inception of the composition of *Jane Eyre* in 1846 through her untimely death in 1854. The novel is an exercise of metafiction in a Victorian setting. The novel engages with the present-day fascination of the canonical status of *Jane Eyre* along with a curiosity about its creator's internal raging and musings. The novel's interest in Victorian characters, persons, and settings is obvious, however it does not react to the mainstream ideologies of the time. The novel, to establish the sense of 'becoming', resorts to the use of continual present as the tense form of narration. It opens in 1846 with Patrick Brontë recovering from a recent eye surgery as Charlotte Brontë sits in a dark corner of the room and starts to compose the narrative of a young and penniless governess who is desperate to find acceptance as well as purpose. During the lonely hours of her father's recovery, she remembers and recollects the hurts and affronts she has experienced in her life. The novel is divided into three parts; the events of the first centred in Manchester, the second in Haworth Parsonage where Emily Brontë carries out the narration and the third part that follows Charlotte Brontë to London after her triumphant publication and satisfying recognition of *Jane Eyre*. Kohler, with a fine balance between fact and fiction, crafts a deeply moving vision of Charlotte Brontë's life based on biographies, letters, and other literary works on the Brontë family. Kohler's Brontë is passionate and temperamental unlike most biographies. Kohler delicately unravels the connection between one of literature's indelible creations and its remarkable creator. The novel's genre is in turn fluid that it cannot be categorised as a fictionalised

biography of a historical figure, as in effect, Kohler writes the biography of a novel, through the reimagination of the creation process to establish connections between real people in Charlotte Brontë's life and the imagined plot events and fictional characters in *Jane Eyre*. *Becoming Jane Eyre* is related to 'celebrity bio-fiction' of our times while at the same time differing from the genre in its treatment of the subject's biography.

Books that represent the world of the adult and the world of children alike with equal force often serve as a bridge between childhood and adulthood. Stories that are written specifically for children do not serve this function. As a bildungsroman text that devotes to both the character's childhood experiences and the ordeals of growing up in equal gravity to her adulthood and its perils, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* has kept ardent child readers captivated in interest. Graphic adaptations of *Jane Eyre* have in fact contributed to the development of reading interests in young readers who otherwise might find reading a tiresome process. Though graphic novels might be heavy with its art works and panel organisations, graphic adaptations of classics make the process seem easier and digestible to children. Imogen Russel Williams in "Speed, rage, heat or stink: The conventions and merits of the children's graphic novel" observes that comics and graphic novels for children are perfect for "reluctant" child readers. Though young readers in the United Kingdom tend to show a big appetite for foreign comics, home-borne graphic novels and classic adaptations are also enjoying impetus. Over the years, many illustrated and graphic adaptations of the novel have been produced across the globe to acquaint children to this literary classic such as the Academic Industries edition of 1984, Classical Comics edition of 2008, Saddleback edition of 2009, to name a few.

Though often dismissed as “too easy” by parents and teachers, children’s graphic novels are experiencing a boom in the United States (Williams, 22). The growing popularity of middle grade and young adult graphic novels has attracted the attention of small and big publishers alike that *Jane Eyre* is reinvented and adapted over again.

In the past, texts were merely categorised into texts for children and adults. Though it is easy to determine what an adult text is, labelling literature that attracts children belonging to different stages of childhood as “children's literature” would be imprecise and vague. Concerns on the problems of labelling all non-adult literature as “children's literature” led to subsets within such as juvenile, middle grade, adolescent, young adult and so on (Crowe, 120). Cultural texts aimed at young people between 12 and 18 years of age account for critical and commercial recognition in today’s world. There is a consensus between scholars, critics, and authors that Young Adult literature has become a “global phenomenon” (Pearce, 1).

Jane Eyre is a best-loved novel for many people, read first in their childhood “with sympathy but incomplete understanding” (Harvey, 1). Most readers resume their reading of the novel at a later stage in their life for gaining deeper insights.

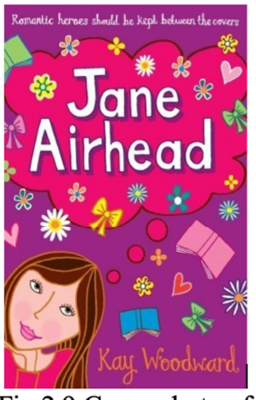


Fig 2.9 Cover photo of *Jane Airhead*

Jane Airhead (2009), Kay Woodward’s take on *Jane Eyre* is something that would appeal to adolescent readers. Kay Woodward is an English novelist who has written over a hundred children’s books, including storybooks, series fiction and picture books. It is a lighthearted spin-off of the dark and

intense classic with the protagonist, Jane Airhead obsessed with Brontë's Jane and tries to yolk fiction and her reality together. The teenager eventually comes to the realisation that copying fiction does not always work in real life. It is a woman centred text with most of its major characters including the protagonist being women.

Woodward presents the protagonist, Charlotte Penman, "wannabe Jane Eyre" (9), nearly fifteen with an authentic nineteenth century hairdo, as obsessed with Brontë that her mother believes that she is acting weird for her age. She dreams of living in a gothic mansion in Yorkshire and prefers not to attend the Harraby Comprehensive School she goes to. She kept mixing up fact and fiction that she calls out the names of Jane Eyre's teachers at Lowood instead of her own. She is a chik-lit fan who worries about her "mum's love life" (Woodward, 8) who has been single since her separation from her ex-husband. Charlotte is in active pursuit of a dark, romantic, and enigmatic Rochester-like boyfriend for her mother. She finds in her new French teacher Mr. Grant, with dark hair, dark skin and dark arched eyebrows, the perfect Rochester for her mother even though her own love life is pretty much non-existent. With a vocabulary appropriate for a reader between 10 and 12, and a bubbly titling, pink cover ornate with ribbons and flowers, *Jane Airhead* is light and unadventurous for even a teenage reader. But within the genre it is an interesting tale of a fun filled teenager besotted with Brontë's romantic gothic novel.

Fig 2.10 Cover photo of *Jane*

April Lindner is an American poet and young adult novelist who is the author of *Jane*, *Catherine*, *Love* and *Lucy*. Lindner's *Jane* (2010)

is also a young adult novel in which the central character Jane Moore is portrayed as a desperate college girl, forced to drop out of college owing to the unexpected death of her parents. Like Jane Eyre, Jane Moore takes up the job of a nanny to a rock singer's ward. Edward Rochester, envisioned as Nico Rathburn is a world-famous musician on the brink of a huge comeback. Jane loses her estranged parents in an accident, has no inheritance, no support from her equally estranged siblings Mark and Jenna, but with a sizeable debt to pay off. Jane, who is oblivious to pop culture, becomes the nanny to Madeline, former rock star Rathburn's daughter. Rathburn, attempting a come-back, has been out of fame for the past few years, has a troubled image as he was busted for the possession of cocaine, and for his relationship with high profile women and his share of "old bad boy stuff". (Lindner, 9) Because of her obliviousness to pop culture, Jane finds Rathburn's trade and lifestyle of excesses totally strange. He is haunted by his past and blames himself for enticing his wife Bibi Oliviera, to drugs and debauchery that triggered her schizophrenia. Bibi ended up in the rehab and Nico dated a French pop singer, known by the name, Celine, broke up with her years later, won the custody of their child, brought a palatial mansion at Connecticut, released Bibi from rehab, locked her up on its third floor and entrusted her to Brenda. Despite being incredibly practical as well as emotionally reserved, Jane falls for her employer. The plot remains faithful to its original, with Jane fleeing Thornfield after realising that Nico was still married, taken into the family of Rivers, and contemplating leaving with St. John to Haiti after he finishes divinity school. Lindner's story is a typical young adult romance of two star-crossed lovers. Though young readers might find Nico a hero of the bygone times, it still would fit their fantasies of the bad boy or the ageing rock star. There

are no surprises, and both the novels share the same emotional tenor of a young Jane's devotion to an older man, tortured and love starved.

Though it can be argued that a manga is a subset of young adult literature or Graphic literature, treating it as a separate genre with its own set of specificities is quite important. Manga is a general term used collectively for comics and graphic novels from Japan, which is an integral element of Japanese popular culture (JPC). They conform to a style of Japanese narrative of the nineteenth century, but they have a history that dates back to sometime in the 10th century BC. Manga as an art form is enjoyed by people of all ages and walks of life. They cover a broad range of genres like adventure, romance, mystery, horror, gothic, science fiction, fantasy, and erotic. In *Manga: An Anthology of Global and Cultural Perspectives*, Tony Johnson-Woods suggests that the classification of mangas into categories like the above might not be always effortless as there is manga for every "taste, age, group, and interest" that it is "meaningless to try to describe the genres" (8). In the confusing profusion of manga genres, more traditional categories like fantasy, romance and science fiction are generally used to classify manga. Manga is also an increasingly major part of Japanese publishing industry.

One major feature that makes *Jane Eyre* an easily adaptable text into manga is its first-person narrative and focus on one main character. Japanese manga differs from western comics in several salient ways. The main difference between manga and a comic is this emphasis on a central character. As manga mimics an Asian reading orientation, it is read from the right to left, and generally printed in black and white due to time constraints, artistic reasons and to cut down the expense of creation and printing and lacks the hyper colouring of Western comics. In other

words, the narrative flow is not as simplistic as that in Western comics. The visual aesthetic is also startling as it uses a wide variety of frames, highly detailed backgrounds, the *chibi* (dwarf like small renditions of characters which indicate anger or frustration), and cinematic angles that flavour its narratives. Even though illustrations are done in black and white, the inking, shading, and toning produce differing effects. (Woods, 5-6) Mostly intended for the young adult readers, manga, in its accurate adaptations of classic novels with an intense and gripping story, alongside its lush artwork would please readers and critics alike.

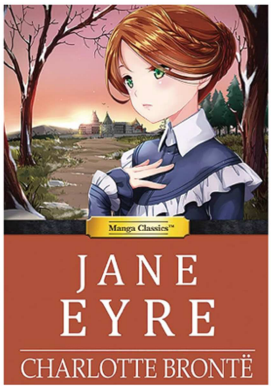


Fig 2.11 Cover photo of *Jane Eyre* (Manga)

Post 2000, with the rise of new technology, manga spread vigorously around the world contributing to an increase in the number of fans of JPC. (Iida, 154) *Manga Classics: Jane Eyre* (2016), adapted by Crystal S. Chan and artwork by Sun Neko Lee, is a fine example of how the novel has transcended borders and assimilated with the popular culture of a different continent. The publishers present to the readers an easily accessible and reader friendly format of the novel, taking few liberties with the original.

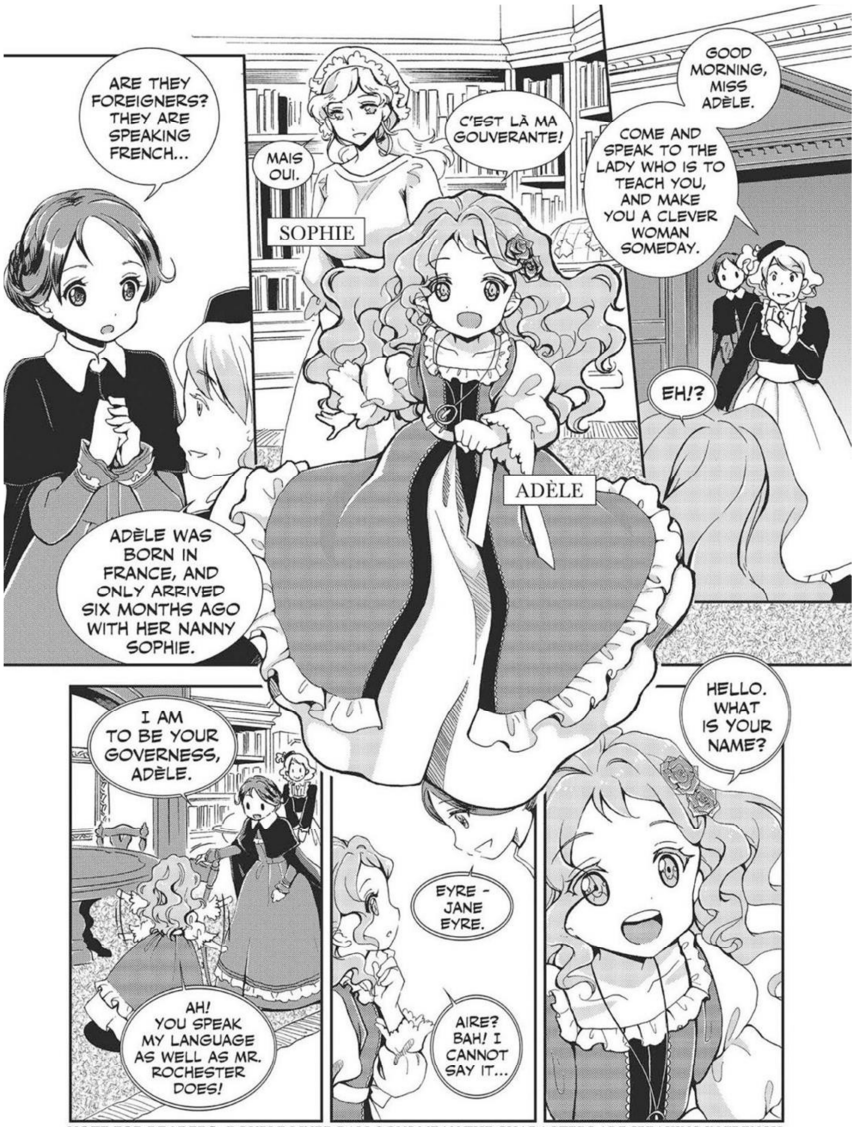
In Chan's words, this adaptation was done remaining true to the original while taking advantage of the unique properties of manga to provide the reader new insights and enjoyment (313). To keep readers interested in the narrative, Chan included cliff-hangers at the end of every chapter to add an element of mystery and suspense. To create a memorable impression and tension, she is also seen borrowing dialogues from later scenes in the novel and placing it much earlier in the book.

Such precision has been given to the choice of dialogues from the original, as a manga uses less text than a prose novel.

Only dialogues that make the story coherent and tie up the events are chosen and employed. Manga stays true to the original in the depiction of Rochester as a gypsy woman (Fig.2.12) as in this graphic version of novel, the differences between male and female features could be minimised easily while drawing.

(Fig.2.12)

Most film adaptations as discussed in chapter three of the thesis fail to include the famous gypsy scene from *Jane Eyre* because of the difficulty in convincingly disguising male character as a female fortune teller. This version of manga presents Adele's French dialogues in the novel translated into English and enclosed with double lined balloons. The original French dialogues are also presented as footnotes. (Fig. 2.13)



NOTE FOR READERS : DOUBLE-LINED BALLOONS MEAN THE CHARACTERS ARE SPEAKING IN FRENCH.
C'EST LÀ MA GOUVERANTE! : IT IS MY GOVERNESS!
MAIS OUI. : YES.

(Fig. 2.13)

This manga version exhibits a lot of anger in the characters, clearly visible in the various panels of the novel. On numerous occasions, where the characters of the novel exhibited calm composures, the artist employs spiky or jagged speech bubbles depicting anger and yelling. On p.27, the entire left panel is dedicated to Jane's furiousness directed at her Aunt Mrs. Reed, which is the only true instance from the novel where Jane is visibly angry and screams at someone. However, she yells at Rochester on panel 7 on p.97 who was suspicious of the originality of her sketches, and Rochester is seen to yell at Jane for not finding him handsome, clearly noticeable by the jagged speech bubbles, Rochester's facial expressions and lines emanating from his figure, indicating violence.Despite the few deviations from the original, the appropriation of the novel to Japanese popular culture is remarkable and paves the way for many such similar renditions into foreign cultures in the future.

As it has already been established, though generally considered as a text that upholds feminism, post-colonial scholarship in its analysis of *Jane Eyre* has criticized the novel for its evident and inherent racism. Feminism in the text is also not without probems. The idea that it is a feminist text can be contested mainly because of the overwhelming influence of male characters like Rochester and Rivers in Jane's life which undermines the text's feminism. *Jane Eyre*'s feminism represents the struggles and aspirations of the middle-class white women while neglecting the experiences of other sections like the black women, lower middle-class women, working class women, creole women, foreign women, and the like. While the select genre-transformed adaptations follow the plotline and events of

Jane Eyre closely, these texts have responded to the racial and gender concerns of the hypertext differently.

Jasper Fforde's *The Eyre Affair*, does not carry forward the racial prejudices of Brontë's original, primarily because it functions not as a retelling/reinterpretation/ sequel/prequel but as a spin-off which draws characters from Brontë and places them in a totally different plot. The lead character, Thursday Next is inspired from Jane Eyre, yet different from her in her experiences, familial situations, and vocation. Thursday Next is lifted from her real world and slipped into the world of Jane and Rochester. There is a play of virtue and vices within the text, which however does not connect to the binary opposition of racism; the colonist and the colonized/the other. Fforde's portrayal of Thursday Next as a determined, intelligent, and smart detective sits well with the modern readers and their gender sensibilities. Lyndsay Faye in *Jane Steele* attempts to throw light upon the racial prejudices against foreign women, through the portrayal of Anne-Laure Steele, the protagonist's mother. Mrs. Steele is French, an artist, and considered eccentric. She is the representative of both Celine Varens, the artist and Bertha Mason, the insane creole. The feminism embodied in the text is parallel to *Jane Eyre* by being far from intersectional and failing to accommodate plurality. While the text does not engage with the episode of Charles Thornfield/Rochester's imperialist endeavour in the Caribbean, Faye elaborates on Charles Thornfield's proximity and intimacy with a group of immigrant Indians in London. Though a serial killer, Jane Steele's sense of entitlement owing to her national identity is objectionable. She speaks and thinks like a true imperialist, perpetually finding fault with the ways of the 'other'. She

finds their spice filled kitchen nauseating, their language odd, and their customs strange. In fact, Faye presents Charles Thornfield as an English man whose 'Britishness' has faded in the searing heat of India, where he served as a doctor. Sharon Shinn's *Jenna Starborn* having hybridised a Victorian gothic romance with the genre of science fiction, has not considered gender representations much, mostly because the events of the text happen in a futuristic time in a space far from ours. The setting is a different planet in which everything is technology driven. Discourses on gender and racial identities are pointless and hence receive little attention. The insanity or instability of the cyborg who represents Bertha, stems not from racial insecurities but technical glitches. However, Shinn has touched upon the imperialist project of the British empire in a convincing manner. We see characters like Sinclair Rainey aspiring to join 'homesteading' missions, that are meant to colonize hospitable planets and civilize its alien population. *Jane Eyre*'s erotic adaptations, like Karena Rose's *Jane Eyrotica*, Eve Sinclair's *Jane Eyre Laid Bare*, and Marian Tee's *Mr. Rochester British Bad Boy* can be considered as feminist texts in their portrayal of the protagonist's sexuality, which in Brontë had been constrained by codes of puritan virtuousness. While critics like Sandra Gilbert have identified the inherent sexual tension in *Jane Eyre*, which Brontë might have chosen not to explore probably in fear of moral judgements, Rose, Sinclair and Tee have built their empires on it. Their texts feature Jane Eyre as unapologetically libidinous though not always liberated. While Rose's and Tee's Jane Eyre counterparts are physically and emotionally dependent on Rochester, often seen in physically restrained sexual acts with their partners, Sinclair's Jane leaves Rochester upon her realization that she would soon be tuned into a sex slave under Bertha Mason, Rochester's sexually

dominant first wife. Bertha's insanity is, however, attributed to her amorousness and sexually dominant nature, which ironically reaffirms social enforcements that necessitate the need to curb women's sexualities. While blending the romance and the vampire genre together in *Jane Slayre*, Sherri Browning Erwin's decision to reimagine Jane Eyre as a vampire slayer like Abraham Van Helsing, rather than a vampire romancer, is commendable. By doing so, Erwin has liberated Jane from the restraints of her gender as she functions as a vigilante determined to cut down the earth's vampire population. Vampire and werewolves plague humans and it is up to slayers like Jane to exterminate them. She works as a governess through the day and as a slayer through the night. While the job of a governess is a gender role, as it is meant to be taken up by women, her role as a vampire hunter is unconventional. Her night vocation precisely makes her more powerful than Rochester, who is just an ordinary yet rich man. The racial prejudice in Shinn's narrative work is like Brontë's. Bertha Mason is portrayed as the deadly werewolf who becomes infected from the bite of her Jamaican lover, signifying that the roots and germs of the 'undead' and the werewolfs are in the exotic lands. Moreover St. John, Jane's slayer cousin is all set for his mission in India, where the vampire population is rather unchecked and hence, out of control. Being a biographical fiction, Sheila Kohler's *Becoming Jane Eyre* traces the life of the fictional character in its relationship to its creator Charlotte Brontë, who lived in an era where women were disadvantaged financially, socially, biologically, and so on. Men controlled every aspect of the society, the workings of the family included. They imposed codes of moral righteousness on women and regulated them continually. Men and women inhabited separate spheres that never converged. The ideology of separate spheres which was

defined by ‘natural’ characteristics made man superior and women inferior. This biography presents Charlotte Brontë as an iconoclast who went against social conventions that considered literature not as a business in a woman’s life. The Poet Laureate, Robert Southey, in his response to a letter from Brontë asking for an opinion on her work, advises Brontë to be more engaged in her “proper duties” rather than wasting her time on artistic pursuits (Hartley, 1). The graphic novels chosen for the study, that include the illustrated children’s classics as well as the *Japanese Manga*, translated *Jane Eyre* from its prose format to the graphic format. Hence, the politics of the principal text has not undergone any transformation in the process and remains true to the original.

Recent decades have witnessed the proliferation of Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* into popular culture emphasising the novel’s afterlives in the form of direct rewriting, reinterpretations, prequels, sequels, spin-offs, and mashups. It is believed that these varying engagements are proof to the novel’s everlasting resourcefulness which can spawn newer readings and interpretations in any genre possible with relative ease and that *Jane Eyre* qualifies to be a neo-Victorian muse for contemporary authors. Though the longevity of such *Jane Eyre* inspired fiction might be a question, we cannot ignore the diversity of genres and styles of appropriation.

CHAPTER III

Muffled and Stifled: Deciphering the Voices of Other Characters in *Jane Eyre*

Every text contains numerous voices out of which one enjoys dominance, steers the course of the narrative and shapes and influences a reader's perception of the other subservient voices of the text. The other voices generally get stifled under the overbearing voice of the narrator. Prequels, sequels, and re-interpretations, in this respect, can be read as attempts to validate the other neglected or misread characters of a hypotext. A century and seven decades after its publication, *Jane Eyre*, with its many characters who deserve to be credited or whose lives were reduced to the impressions of its young and rather naive protagonist, found itself subjected to various literary experiments in terms of its narrative voice. Authors chose to bring to the fore voices stifled or neglected in the principal novel to guarantee the literary justice each character rightfully deserved.

As Roland Barthes puts it in his essay, "The Death of the Author", though the author's empire is the most powerful, certain writers attempt to topple it:

> It will always be impossible to know, for the good reason that all writing is itself this special voice, consisting of several indiscernible voices, and that literature is precisely the invention of this voice, to which we cannot assign a specific origin. (49)

According to Barthes, it is the reader who provides the text its meaning through the invention of or creation of "this special voice" along with the introduction of other voices from other texts. Barthes claims that literary magazines, writer's biographies, interviews, manuals of literary histories and the like influence the way we perceive literature as "tyrannically centred on the author, his person, his history, his tastes [and] his passions" (para 2). He does not agree that the sole voice of a text is that of the author.

Graham Allen, in *Intertextuality* examines Barthes' criticism of the relationship between the author and the reader:

> In the modern market system, the name of the author allows the work to be an item of exchange value, but it also, Barthes argues, promotes a view of interpretation, and of the relationship between author, work, and the reader-critic, in which reading is a form of consumption. The author places meaning in the work, so traditional accounts argue, and the reader-critic consumes that meaning; once this process has been accomplished the reader is free to move on to the next work (71).

Allen refers to Barthes' idea of "consumers" and "readers/writers" to suggest that relying on the author as an apparatus to analyse a text makes someone a consumer, someone who reads a text and moves on to the next. A "reader", on the contrary, uses the "several indiscernible voices", from all the texts previously read as tools of analysis to transform into the "writer" of the text, applying additional layers and multiple meanings while reading.

The late twentieth and twenty first centuries have seen a proliferation of such narratives in which voices/characters are invoked, awakened, revisited, and rewritten. Victorian novels serve as a fertile ground which spawns such retellings. Contemporary writers continue to write fascinating narratives that critique Victorian culture and ways. Significantly, the number of novels born from Brontë's *Jane Eyre* make it an ideal source of study and assessment. Though Victorian novels are evaluated by postmodern writers differently, a common approach to their treatments is the foregrounding of marginalised and silenced cultures.

Edward Said believes that the post-modern writers think less of writing "original and authentic literature" and are instead interested in rewriting where the writing changes from "original inscription to parallel script" (57). Postmodernism gives voice to the "others" who do not spring from a dominant centre and legitimises all forms of cultural expressions to deconstruct absolute hierarchies and conventions. Modern readings of Charlotte Brontë's novels are guided by knowledge of identities, class, race, and gender; awareness of their pertaining issues; and sensitivity towards portrayal of characters and situations.

This chapter investigates the remaining eight adaptations that accentuate the voices of other characters of *Jane Eyre*; imagined and real, to investigate how the dynamics of gender and race work in the selected adaptations. The questions of gender and race are prevalent in all the selected adaptations that feature the sense of entitlement of the white male, the oppressive colonialist attitudes towards the white creoles, particularly women, toxic marriages, sibling rivalry and the stark class divisions characteristic of the age.

Intertextuality became a popular term to designate a writer's dependence on previously existing works. Barthes' perception of intertextuality as a 'citation tissue', that all texts are intertextual in nature, proposed in his work "Theory of the Text" (39), Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of dialogism, that an individual's speech is shaped by its continuous interaction with others' interactions, proposed in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (5-47), and Julia Kristeva's idea of a text as a 'quotation mosaic', that all texts are created through the process of absorption and transformation of another, in "Word, Dialogue and Novel" (37) show that intertextuality embodies a promise of plurality. Rewriting makes use of the idea of intertextuality and draws attention to previously written works while dedicated to reshaping them. Rewriting of Victorian novels became a common practice since Jean Rhys supposedly inaugurated the same in 1966 with her work, *Wide Sargasso Sea*. It is the most obvious and powerful response to *Jane Eyre*, narrated through the perspective of Antoinette/Bertha Mason, Rochester's first wife. Rhys's perspective of the life of Bertha Mason is guided by her own experience of understanding of Jamaica and its colonial history.

Unlike other rewritings of texts from the nineteenth century that take the form of sequels, *Wide Sargasso Sea* is written as a prequel that focuses on Bertha/Antoinette's life. The novel progresses through her marriage to an unnamed English man, presumed as Mr. Rochester, their passionate honeymoon at the Caribean that later became disastrous, her hellish years at Thornfield as a locked-up lunatic and ends

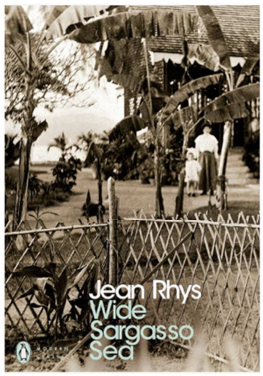


Fig 3.1 Cover photo of *Wide Sargasso Sea*

with Antoinette's intention to set her prsion, Thornfield Hall, ablaze and thereby kill herself and her oppressive husband.

The novel is narrated alternately by Antoinette, a white creole and her unnamed husband, an English man and is set in Antoinette's crumbling mansion at her family estate, a honeymoon house on another island, and the attic room at Thornfield. The hierarchy of racial division is evident in the West Indian setting inhabited by its diverse population that includes black West Indian servants, newly impoverished white plantation owners, white creoles, non-white creoles, former slave owners, colonial interlopers, and prospective entrepreneurs. Antoinette is an intelligent yet brooding and lonely individual whose childhood is plagued by fear and poverty, being born into a slave owning class during the time of emancipation. She is doomed to suffer the confusion of identity as she is an intermediate between the blacks and the pure whites. She is neither accepted by the black slave community nor the white. She is distanced from her mother, lacks friends and feels the hatred of the former slaves. She is subject to judgemental gossip and frequent slandering. Alienation, exclusion, and cruelty mark her relationship with other characters in the novel. She witnesses her family house burned to ashes by a mob of disenfranchised ex-slaves, her brother's death in the conflagration and her mother, Anette's descent into madness driven by the trauma. She marries an Englishman she barely knows, that results in a disastrous honeymoon, gets locked up in her husband's mansion in a cold and distant continent and seeks solace in suicide.

Rhys vindicates Antoinette and demonstrates her intelligence, complex emotions, experiences, and instincts. Her marriage to the unnamed British man

worsens her fate as she becomes financially exploited, physically wielded, emotionally manipulated, sexually betrayed, and psychologically tortured until she kills herself violently. Bertha became the symbol for man's inhumanity to woman and the repressed sexuality of the Victorian age and a woman's unvoiced yet powerful rage. She is both the ugly truth of colonialism and a hideous secret that is conveniently locked up to preserve the decorum of the family and the appearance of the white male.

In Wolfgang G. Muller's opinion in his essay, "The Intertextual Status of Jean Rhys's Wide Sargasso Sea: Dependence on a Victorian Classic and Independence as a Post-Colonial Novel", *Wide Sargasso Sea* as a novel is a paradoxical mix of dependence on a pretext and aesthetic independence (64) that fill the gap of Bertha's story in *Jane Eyre* at a time anterior to the events of the pretext, i.e. the time before Bertha's imprisonment in Thornfield. In Caroline Rody's observation, the novel opens a complex of "lives, relations and social facts" that are absent in *Jane Eyre* (305). The 1990s witnessed a renewed interest in studying the ethical effects of literature. *Wide Sargasso Sea* has not remained immune to this ethical turn in literary studies (Arizti, 39). Bertha's story makes the reader aware of the existence of an "other side" of a story (Maurel,145) as Antoinette herself states in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, "There is always the other side, always" (Rhys, 82). Through its objections to *Jane Eyre, Wide Sargasso Sea,* its most acclaimed prequel, distinguishes itself as a unique text in post-colonial feminist writing, portraying the upheavals of the life of the white creole, Antoinette Cosway, inspired by Bertha Mason, Rochester's mad wife locked away in the attic of his three storeyed

mansion. Through Antoinette, Bertha Mason's voice as a savage lunatic creole in *Jane Eyre* finds an outlet, whose occasional laughter emanating from the stone walls of the attic being the only voice *Jane Eyre* readers ever heard of. In a letter addressed to her friend, Rhys describes herself as brooding over the wrong creole scenes in *Jane Eyre* and above all the cruelty of Mr. Rochester to his unwanted first wife (viii), overcome by his anxieties of incest and racial impurity. (Rhys, xiii). Rhys was vexed at Brontë's portrayal of the creole that she embarked on writing from the perspective of the white creole, the subjectified colonial. (Wyndham and Melly, 262). She hears the voices Brontë pushed to the margin or out of hearing.

Wide Sargasso Sea has a lasting impact on *Jane Eyre* and on retelling as a practice. It is believed to have introduced a new literary movement whose very essence is the rewriting of Victorian myths and stories such as Peter Carey's *Jack Maggs* (1997), and Lloyd Jones' *Mr. Pip* (2007), retellings of Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* (1859), and *Eligible* (2016) by Curtis Sittenfeld, and *The Other Bennet Sister* (2020) by Janice Hadlow, retellings of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813). For a woman, the act of entering a text is an act of survival, observes Adrienne Rich.

> 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 [...] We need to know the writing of the past, and know it differently than we have ever known it; not to pass a tradition but to break its hold over us. (18)

For women writers, rewriting women characters became a part of their feminist project that resulted in the undermining or subverting of what Jean Francois Lyotard refers to as the "metanarrative". As Lyotard famously observed in *The Postmodern Condition*, post modernism is marked by its incredulity towards grand narratives.

> In contemporary society and culture– post-industrial society, postmodern culture– the question of legitimation of knowledge is formulated in different terms. The grand narrative has lost its credibility, regardless of what mode of unification it uses, regardless of whether it is a speculative narrative or a narrative of emancipation. (37)

He argues that no system can be all inclusive and all attempts at enforcing universality are repressive and violent. Linda Hutcheon, in *The Politics of Postmodernism* also comments on the postmodern suspicion to master narratives (61). Postmodernism therefore approves plurality and opposes universality and the absolute. While critics like Umberto Eco believe that a postmodernist revision is an ironic revisiting of the past, some other critics tend to consider it as not merely ironic but a deeply humanistic exercise that ensures the creation of new identities that in turn promote the reformulation of perception of characters marginalised or neglected.

In "Double [De]colonization and the Feminist Criticism of *Wide Sargasso Sea*", Carine Melkom Mardorossian observes that the white Anglo-American feminists who took up Rhys's novel as a successful corrective to the imperialism in

their cult feminist text *Jane Eyre*, realised that any claim to totality and representativeness could inevitably result in the exclusion of some groups from the totality (79). Mardossian observes that Bertha's incapacity to rational thought is no longer read as a virtue of her gender, or reduced to the concept of essential femaleness, and instead has later been read as a colonial subject's attempt to resist the coloniser's domination (81). Antoinette's fragmentary and impressionistic narrative trivialises the reference points of Eurocentric ways of thinking: notions of orderly time and history. The novel complicates chronological order through rigorous use of flashbacks and flash forward techniques. Antoinette and Rochester's narratives are frequently interrupted by dreams, images, and memories that make a linear progression of the plot impossible.

Rochester's values and perceptions, on the other hand, reflect European systems of control and domination. After her marriage to Rochester, the latter takes her money, robs her of her name, and insists that she accept her new name. He violently renames his wife despite her disagreement to it in numerous instances in the novel.

As Helen Nebecker observes in *Jean Rhys: Woman in Passage*, Bertha's renaming is an act of male possessiveness which "strips her of her individual essence" (159)

> He never calls me Antoinette now. (Rhys,71)
>
> 'Don't laugh like that, Bertha'
>
> 'My name is not Bertha; why do you call me Bertha?'

> ‘Because it is a name I’m particularly fond of. I think of you as Bertha.’ (Rhys, 86)
>
> Certainly I will, my dear Bertha’ ‘Not Bertha tonight’ she said.
>
> ‘Of course, on this of all nights, you must be Bertha’ (Rhys, 87)
>
> ‘Bertha’, I said.
>
> ‘Bertha is not my name. You are trying to make me into someone else, calling by another name.’ (Rhys, 94)

Rochester’s continued attempts to rename his wife can be read as his efforts to domesticate Antoinette in terms of sex, and race and eventually confine her to the attic, the other space against which his English mansion can define itself, suggesting an immediate and impending erasure of the colonised. Antoinette’s rejection of the name is a resistance to both his masculinist and imperial authority. Rochester has already framed Antoinette as a mad woman who was contaminated by the blackness of the ex-slaves while the letter from Daniel Cosway, Antoinette’s illegitimate half-brother informing Rochester of Bertha’s mother’s insanity merely confirms his Victorian racial prejudices. Antoniette’s insanity, infidelity, and drunkenness result from Rochester’s misguided belief that insanity runs in her contaminated blood. Rochester is infected by his sense of cultural and racial supremacy and instinctive racism. His toxic personality is characterised by his hatred and distrust towards the ‘other woman', mistrust of the geography, class paranoia, and fear of miscegenation. He is preoccupied by his anxieties of incest and impurity. He considers the landscape malevolent and is bothered by the excesses of it, be it the heat, the

colours, the sound or the smell. He finds the island beautiful and desires to uncover some secret the landscape apparently hides which he attempts to do with Antoinette, who he believes, also cunningly conceals some secret.

> It was a beautiful place-wild, untouched, above all untouched with an alien, disturbing, secret loveliness. And it kept its secret. I want what it hides- that is not nothing (Rhys, 54)

Rochester, the English coloniser, and nobleman, regards the black people of the Caribbean with great loathing. He refuses to acknowledge the customs of the native and scoffs at their traditions. For instance, he disapproves of their custom of trailing dresses as a sign of respect and celebration. He dismisses it as "not a clean habit" (Rhys, 52) regardless of what it signifies. Though he compliments Bertha on her dress she bought from St. Pierre, Martinique, he mocks her for talking about St. Pierre as if it were "Paris" (49). Neither does Rochester accept Bertha's language as he sticks to calling the thatched shelter a "summer house" even after acknowledging that it was called "ajoupa" in Bertha's language. Language also marks a character's place in the society as the coloniser trivialises the language of the natives, a dialect of English and at times French as "debased" (40). He rejects the richness and linguistic variety of the Caribbean reflected in the speech of the white creoles, and black servants like Christophine who could speak "good English if she wanted to, and French as well as patois" (7) and scoffs the efforts of the servant boy to appropriate by learning English in the hope that Rochester would take him along to England. He dismisses the boy through his remark that the English the latter speaks is incomprehensible to him.

Charlotte Brontë's Bertha Mason became the stock character of female insanity ever since *Jane Eyre*. In the 1960s, there was a visible shift of sympathy of literary critics from Jane to Bertha Mason. In "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism", Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak observes that Bertha Mason is a figure "produced by the axiomatics of imperialism" (247). Rhys, who read *Jane Eyre* as a child was moved by Bertha Mason that she resolved to write Bertha's life, observes her publisher. However, as Spivak states, attempts at a full re-inscription of a third world woman as a signifier cannot easily flourish as literature is defined by and caught within the history of imperialism, that reinterpretation would be affected by the fractures and discontinuity of imperialism (254). Bertha's function in Brontë was to serve as an indeterminate boundary between the human and the animal (Spivak, 249). Rhys on the other hand preserves Bertha's humanity and sanity intact as a critique of British imperialism. Rhys depicts how imperialism determines personal and human identities through Antoinette, violently renamed by Rochester as Bertha, who grew up in Jamaica during the time of emancipation, and whose identity was caught between the English imperialist and the black native. She is burdened with the responsibility to play out her role and transform into the fictive other, sets fire to Thornfield, and kills herself so that "Jane Eyre can become the feminist individualist heroine of British Fiction" (Spivak, 251). This can be read as an epistemic violence of colonialism that creates self-immolating colonial subjects for the glorification of the coloniser's social mission.

Though *Jane Eyre* is often read as a role model for female emancipation in Victorian society and often read as a symbol for a woman's refusal to abide by the

norms of the society, Brontë's portrayal of other women in her narrative has been problematic. Brontë presents a protagonist with rebellious temperament, courage, moral strength, and energy who overcomes all obstacles and makes her way through poverty and repression to independence. To what extent Jane's successful career is indebted to circumstances related to colonialism and imperialism is worth examining. Jane's ultimate happiness is guaranteed through the expulsion of Rochester's first wife, a Jamaican creole, from the world of the novel by immolation. Jane Eyre's qualifications as Rochester's prospective bride also stem from her differences from Bertha Mason, the "gross, grovelling, mole eyed blockhead" (352), "alien" (353), "professed harlot" (355) and the foreign beast: the racial language of *Jane Eyre* often read in post-colonial terms.

After Richard Mason, Bertha's brother and Solicitor Briggs interrupt Rochester and Jane's wedding ceremony and accuse him of attempting bigamy, Rochester invites them to see his mad wife and compare her with Jane.

> […] 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. (Brontë, 339)

Following Spivak's discussions on Jane's marriage as an imperialistic project, Firdaus Azim suggests that Brontë presents Jane as a contrast to the 'other' non-western women in J*ane Eyre*, whose "subject-position is seen to have been

determined by the project of imperialism" (180). Brontë presents Bertha as a clear anti-thesis to her pure English protagonist, portraying Bertha as beastly, nightmarish, and insane. Jane becomes the suitable bride by her differences from the foreign woman who is demonic, ragged, and bulky. Bertha's death is not regarded as a tragic event, rather it is a vehicle towards a happy ending that would unite Jane and Rochester. It is through the annihilation of the other that Brontë's protagonist establishes herself as an independent and rational English woman.

In Brontë, Rochester's fixation with racial purity is also evident in his allusions to the risks and horrors of an inappropriate racial union. It is pretty evident that Rochester would not have knowingly married a woman of mixed race owing to her lack of pure English blood. He sought "the antipodes of the creole" even in his mistresses.

> I longed only for what suited me-for the antipodes of the Creole: and I longed vainly. Amongst them all I found not one whom, had I been ever so free, I–warned as I was of the risks, the horrors, the loathing of incongruous unions- would have asked to marry me. (Brontë, 358)

Rhys's Rochester also believes that even in the blood of a white creole lurks the "germ of blackness" (Dalton, 432) and that the impurity of bloodline is brought about by proximity and long association.

> I watched her [Antoinette] critically. She wore a tricorne hat which became her. At least it shadowed her eyes which are too large and can be disconcerting. She never blinks at all it seems to me. Long,

> sad, dark alien eyes. Creole of pure English descent she may be, but they are not English or European either. (Rhys, 40)

This observation shows Rochester's obsession with racial purity and his anxiety over his wife's ancestry not being entirely white.

Jane Eyre's financial independence in the novel through the inheritance from her uncle John Eyre also reflects the colonial project. John Eyre made a fortune as a merchant in Madeira. Jane Eyre's independence in itself is not without problems as Brontë wrote in the interest of the middle-class white women such as herself, Mrs. Fairfax, and the Rivers, often denigrating the upper class as boastful, pompous, and inconsiderate (The Reeds, The Ingrams) and the lower class (Grace Poole) or foreign women (Celine Varens, Bertha Mason) as exotic, materialistic, immoral or even insane implying the feminism that Brontë embodies is far from intersectional. The first world and Eurocentric bias guided the feminist readings of *Jane Eyre*, which were later questioned by the challenges of women of colour, working class women, Jewish women, lesbians, and their allies, demonstrating the limitations of second wave feminism. Celebrated feminist texts that featured the struggles of the white heroine against the oppressive forces of patriarchy were later scrutinised with the new developments in feminist theory and politics and were criticised for the portrayal of an essential female condition that ignored the varied circumstances and oppressions of other groups of women.

Linda Hutcheon's idea of plural feminism in *The Politics of Postmodernism* is relevant here. For Hutcheon, feminist discourse is pluralistic and multifaceted that there are "as many feminisms as there are feminists" (139). As a verbal sign of

difference and plurality, she argues, the term “feminisms” would be best to designate a multiplicity of viewpoints. (139) Brontë’s novel continues to prove unsettling in its use of gender identities along with its association with class and race.

Todd F. Davies and Kenneth Womack in “Reclaiming the Particular: The Ethics of Self and Sexuality in *Wide Sargasso Sea*”, analyses Rhys’s composition of a moral corrective of Brontë that silenced the first Mrs. Rochester. They focus on the idea of “particularity” attributed to its characters by both Rhys and Brontë. According to Davies and Womack, particularity is the essence of human beings.

> In the long and ugly history of human exploitation—whether that exploitation be racist or classist or sexist in nature—the common denominator has been the oppressor's ability to lose sight of the victim's particularity. One of the chief instruments used in the oppression and exploitation of others continues to be the act of silencing the victims. Without the freedom to tell their own stories, the oppressed become the easy prey of the oppressor who fills the silence where the words of the victimised should be heard with distorted stories that must function in untruths and generalities. (Davies, 64)

As Barbara Arizti observes in “The Future That Has Happened: Narrative Freedom and Déjà lu in Jean Rhys’s *Wide Sargasso Sea*”, although Brontë grants Jane “a complete and particular self” (39), Bertha, the white creole is denied agency and remains voiceless. Rhys offers Bertha a voice which she resolutely uses to

recount her lived experiences of her childhood, family, marriage, and the loss of her particularity and self thereafter. Rhys' novel provides the reader with the possibility to glimpse at Antoinette's experiences, her tragedy, and most importantly, her particularity. Her identity is ambiguous as she could not identify with either the ex-slaves who called her a "white cockroach" (64) or the whites who considered her a "white nigger" (64).

> …white cockroach. That's me. That's what they call all of us who were here before their own people in Africa sold them to the slave traders. And I've heard English women call us white niggers. (Rhys, 64)

Former slave owners, the creoles are hated by the blacks and are also despised by the whites due to their long association with the blacks. Antoinette learns of the great divide among races which makes her more of an outsider due to her race hybridity.

Susan Meyer in her analysis of the use of colours in Brontë identifies "blackness" as an attribute to domination. According to Meyer, blackness not only represents the other but also their desire for revenge. She adds that though Brontë tries to question the ideology of imperialism, she fails to use the 'other' to criticise British colonialism and ends up reaffirming it. Brontë confronts the reality of British race relations through the representation of an actual Jamaican black woman, but what begins as a critique of imperialism becomes a mere appropriation of the metaphor of slavery. Rhys's representation of Bertha as a white Jamaican woman further complicates her oppressed status making her a 'native subject' (250). The

peculiar identity crisis that Antoinette suffers from makes her wonder who she really is, what her national identity was, where she truly belonged, and why she ever was born (Rhys, 64).

In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Rhys traces the issue of race beyond history and politics to the unconscious where racial prejudices run their deepest roots. She addresses western imagination and their continuous struggle with the dilemma of race along with the political sympathies for the dispossessed white minority and oppressed black majority. *Wide Sargasso Sea* exposes the extent to which intimate things such as "personal and human identity might be determined by the politics of imperialism" (Spivak, 250) and how colonial ideology penetrates individuality and identity to tempt readers to be carried away by the dominant ideology. It explores the negotiation of space between binaries of race, gender, and identities. It is a valuable historical work that explores Victorian patriarchy, the complex socio-political history of the West Indies, and sexualised racism.

Scholars have analysed the portrayal of children and childhood in *Jane Eyre*. Though they focus on Brontë's portrayal of young Jane, they tend to neglect Adele, who remains a child for most part of the novel. Adele Varens remains neglected in the Jane *Eyre* scholarship. Though spirited, affectionate, obliging and loyal, Adele is generally caricatured as mini-Celine or even mini-Blanche. Emma Tennant's *Adele: The Hidden Story of Jane Eyre* (2002) traces the life of Adele, Rochester's supposedly illegitimate daughter with Celine Varens in Brontë's original.

Jane Eyre's story unfolds anew through the eyes of Adele, the daughter of the celebrated Parisian dancer, a homesick, forlorn eight- year-old brought to

England by her mother's former lover who refuses to acknowledge Adele as his daughter. Rochester affirms that he sees no proof of "grim paternity" (Brontë, 169) written in Adele's countenance and adds that his dog, Pilot, was more like him than Adele. As he claims, it was not any natural claim that urged him to support Adele when he heard of her destitute status but sheer humanity that compelled him to do it. He felt responsible for a child that was born into his household and resolved to support her regardless of her parentage. *Adele* displays a clear intertextual relationship with *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*. *Adele* recalls the heroines of both Brontë's original and Rhys's Caribbean narrative.

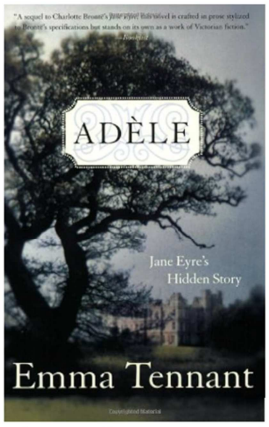


Fig 3.2 Cover photo of *Adele*

Adele identifies with Antoinette's discontentment in the place she was forcibly brought to, like Adele herself. Adele, the Francophone girl, dislikes her benefactor's foreboding mansion, finding herself in the cold, strange and foreign land called England. By the twentieth century, critics discussed the clash of national identities, particularly France and England, in *Jane Eyre* analysing the portrayal of Adele Varens and Celine Varens. Tennant focuses on Anglocentrism in *Jane Eyre* and the English/French divide, so obvious in Brontë. Brontë even attributes to Adele traits of her Parisian mother, reflecting the nineteenth century English opinion of French women. Rochester refers to Adele as a "miniature of Celine Varens" and adds on to it through the suggestion that "coquetry runs in her blood, blends with her blood, and season the marrow of her bones" (Brontë, 163). Jane Eyre's remarks on Adele throws light upon her perceived race prejudices.

> My pupil was a lively child, who had been spoilt and indulged, and therefore was sometimes wayward; … she soon forgot her little freaks and became obedient and teachable. She had no great talents, no marked traits of character, no peculiar development of feeling or taste, which raised her one inch above the ordinary level of childhood. (Brontë, 128)

Being the daughter of a French dancer, Adele is right away dismissed as untalented, plain, and worthless of higher education. However, through an earlier observation on Adele, Jane Eyre contradicts herself. Brontë specifies that Adele is possibly as young as eight and no older than ten when Jane first meets her. By then, she was a practised and accomplished singer, dancer, and reciter.

> Adele sang the canzonetta tunefully enough, and with the naivete of her age…She then declaimed the little piece with an attention to punctuation and emphasis, a flexibility of voice, and an appropriateness of gesture, very unusual indeed at her age, and which proved she had been carefully trained. (Brontë 121-22) As Alexandra Valint observes in "Accepting Adele in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*",

Jane's remark that Adele possesses "unusual" talent in voice, gesture, and memory makes both Rochester and Jane's comments that Adele has no talents patently untrue (207). Adele offers to demonstrate her skills to Jane, dances of her own accord as it pleases herself and expresses her desire to even participate in the adult game of charades at the Thornfield ball. However, critics have summarily

dismissed or ignored Adele's artistic tendencies even though she exhibits the agency and attitude for it. Adele exhibits extraordinary brilliance in the choice of her songs that matches her circumstances. The opera song of a "forsaken lady" (Brontë, 121) who was betrayed by her lover and hides her distress in her pride, confidence and fine clothing resonates with her situation as Rochester who invited Adele to "live with him in England" has not "kept his word" (Brontë 122) as Rochester leaves his ward behind, travels across Europe and stays in hotels. Jane observes that the subject of Adele's song "seemed strangely chosen for an infant singer" (Brontë, 121). In fact, Adele uses her artistic talents to voice her feelings which otherwise would have been hard or impossible for her to articulate.

Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar analyse the existing critical investigation that has been overshadowed by Adele's national identity which defined Adele by her obsession with "fashionable gowns rather than for love or freedom" (Gilbert, 350). They raise the question whether Adele, the daughter of the "fallen female" would be a "model female in a world of prostitutes" (350). However, another interesting aspect of the rejection of Adele's talents as mere theatrics taught by her French mother, is the juxtaposition of Rochester's art in the novel. Brontë does not condemn theatricality unequivocally as she portrayed Rochester as someone with a "fine voice" and who "liked to sing". (312)

Anne Jackson argues that despite Rochester-driven charades and the gypsy scene in *Jane Eyre*, Adele's performances in *Jane Eyre* are not shown to function similarly (131). Adele's agency and pleasure in the deployment of her accomplishments, on the contrary, are viewed as antics or defects.

Rochester also observes that he rescued Adele from the "slime and mud of Paris" and transplanted her to grow up "clean in the wholesome soil of an English country garden" (Brontë,170). Towards the end of the novel, Jane notes that "a sound English education corrected in great measure her French defects; and when she left school, I found in her a pleasing and obliging companion – docile, good-tempered, and well principled" (Brontë, 519). Brontë affirms that Jane's pure English influence tames Adele and prevents her from becoming morally depraved like her mother, Celine. It can be rightfully observed that Adele, the abandoned, foreign, and bastard child, is the most mistreated and marginalised character of *Jane Eyre*, who receives an unfair treatment equal to or worse than Bertha Mason. Tennant gives Adele a story while leaving Jane Eyre at the margins. Tennant features five narrators out of which Adele plays the dominant role, along with Rochester in the second, Grace Poole, Mrs. Fairfax and a third person narrator. Tennant ensures that the secondary women in Brontë's novel enjoy greater status and voice. Despite her centrality in the novel, Tennant also throws light on the power Rochester exercised in his household and its dependents through her suggestion that all women in the house depended on Rochester's good or ill will. Rochester treats Adele as he treated Celine in the past. He showers her with presents and acts disgusted by Adele's excitement and joy of receiving them.

> …[t]ake it into a corner, you genuine daughter of Paris, and amuse yourself with dis-embowelling it', said the deep and rather sarcastic voice of Mr. Rochester, proceeding from the depths of an immense easy chair at the fireside. 'And mind', he continued, 'don't bother me

> with any details of the anatomical process, or any notice of the condition of the entrails. (Brontë, 152)

Rochester expresses his dissatisfaction in being burdened with Adele's custody and states that "in some moods", he "would fain be rid of" the "French floweret" (Brontë, 163) that was left on his hands. He protected her not out of love but for the Roman Catholic principle of expiating numerous sins by a good deed, mindful that he had committed several sins in his prime. Adele is a salvation project for Rochester. He tries to project Celine's shallowness and rapaciousness onto Adele. He willingly sexualizes Adele and manipulates her to act like her promiscuous mother to seek revenge on the dead. By foregrounding Adele's narrative, Tennant defends Celine Varens, Adele's French mother who was regarded as improper and immoral by British standards. She also presents Bertha Mason as a harmless and amiable woman who befriends Adele, whom Brontë accused as eccentric and wild. In Adele's story, Jane Eyre is not a gracious soul and Rochester's household appears dreary and lonely. It is not the foreign women; the French or the creole, who are the problem makers in Tennant's novel but the demonised English housekeeper, Mrs. Fairfax who does much of the plotting to bump off both Bertha Mason and Jane Eyre so that Mr. Rochester could marry Ms. Blanche Ingram. Emma Tennant's Adele is neither a parody nor pastiche, but a text that rewrites *Jane Eyre* in a new light exposing its darker shades of racism.

Claire Moise's *Adele Grace and Celine: The Other Women of Jane Eyre* (2009) also presents the sketched women of *Jane Eyre* with fuller lives. The novel

focuses on the lives of Adele; Rochester's ward, Grace; his most devoted servant or confidant, and Celine; the French opera dancer and Rochester's former mistress.

Adele Grace and Celine: The Other Women of Jane Eyre (2009) traces the lives of three women tangential to the story of Jane Eyre and Edward Rochester. Moise's intention is to provide a background to these characters, their evolution, and motivations within the framework of Brontë's novel. In "A Dialogue of Self and Soul: Plain Jane's Progress", Gilbert and Gubar point out that aside from the housekeeper Mrs. Fairfax, three other women; Adele, Grace, and Blanche, are important "negative role models" for Jane. (350) The novel is narrated through the perspective of Adele Varens, who in *Jane Eyre* is Rochester's ward and presumed daughter, abandoned by her mother and with no paternal claims on Rochester. In Rochester's opinion, Adele was rescued "out of the slime and mud of Paris" and transplanted to England to "grow up clean in the wholesome soil of an English country garden" (Brontë, 170). The premise of Moise's novel is that Adele is the biological daughter of Rochester and the French opera dancer Celine Varens. Celine feigns her death and lets Rochester take custody of her eight-year-old daughter in the hope that Adele could lead the comfortable life of an English upper-class lady. Celine becomes frantic over her separation with Adele and writes to Grace Poole, who she knew Rochester trusted with his life's greatest secret. Grace Poole writes back to Celine owing to her solitary life as Bertha Mason's keeper in the attic and the two women begin a secret twenty-year

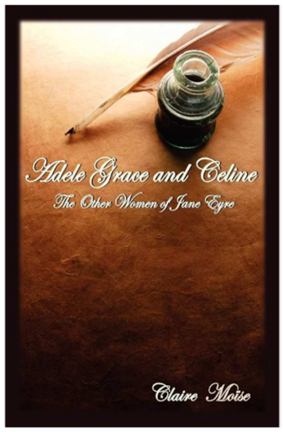


Fig 3.3 Cover photo of *Adele Grace and Celine*

correspondence with another. The narrator Adele is an octogenarian who discovers a series of letters exchanged between Grace Poole, her father's servant and Celine Varens, her mother. The narrative transitions from epistolary to the first person as Adele learns about her own childhood and the lives of the two women. Moise looks at *Jane Eyre*'s women with greater empathy than Brontë herself.

Vocation of women in Victorian high societies was restricted to keeping their husband's house and raising their children. Adele is characterised as a studious and ambitious woman, a portrayal that goes against Rochester and Jane's remarks on Adele's lack of talents, unwilling to abide by the oppressive standards of the society she lived in. Jane Eyre and Rochester who make occasional appearances in the novel seem to stand by Adele in her decisions about her life without imposing their wishes upon her, mostly because they themselves did not bother about society much. Grace, at numerous instances in her letters to Celine, describes Adele as a woman who has "got her own mind" (Moise, 84, 147) for Adele outgrew her own tragedies in life like being born out of wedlock, orphaned at a tender age in a foreign land and the frustration over her failed attempts to establish a bond with her benefactor. Her peculiar circumstances however made her a determined and confident woman who enjoyed greater freedom than any young girl of her time could expect or dream of. Adele pursues her school education shortly after Thornfield Hall gets burnt down and thereafter attends Bedford College for Women at the University of London, though Rochester initially objects to young ladies attending lectures of male teachers unchaperoned. Adele retorts that even married ladies from fine families attend classes at Bedford and assures him that there would be no scandal. True to her

puritanical nature, Jane Eyre on the other hand was concerned that people at the universities might be dissenters and nonconformists. Adele tactfully expresses her deep disappointment in Oxford and Cambridge, the universities without non-conformists then, for denying admission to women (84). Adele studies botany and biology and then joins Florence Nightingale as a nurse during the Crimean war despite Jane and Rochester dismissing her as a girl with "no great talent" (Brontë,128). During her time, though it was an offence for a governess to be engaged while at the service of a family, Adele was unconventional in her decision not to dismiss her ward Lissette's governess for being engaged while at service to her family. Instead, she extends her full support to her young governess for her determination to earn a living until her fiancé establishes himself and believes that no young and educated woman be expected to live and behave like a member of the religious order to earn a living (190) and there is no harm in letting her employees lead a normal life as she herself grew up in a house in which the governess married the master. She encourages a young upper-class lady and her new neighbour to teach and participate in the affairs of a school though it was inappropriate for a woman of her class.

Unlike other young women, she exercises greater autonomy in her life, doing as she pleased. Adele's views on religion were also unique as she rejected the mandate of a single form of worship for a Christian, embracing all sects of Christianity including Catholics, Protestants, and even non-conformists- the Methodists, Unitarians, and Quakers. Adele eventually falls in love with the Baron, Garnet Gresham, marries him and leads a comfortable but rather uneventful life in

his family estate, Drayton Abbey in Shropshire. Adele observes that while most men would not let alone accept such independence and achievement in a wife, Garnet treasured those aspects of hers (52) making him a perfect gentleman and above all, a great human. However, she greatly missed the university life in London as she failed to establish a friendship with any woman in her neighbourhood for their lack of education and intellect.

She did not maintain strict class boundaries and treated her employees with compassion, largely owing to her confusion in her own class. She helps her employees in need, doing work “not fitting for a lady” (207) and hopes to find a friend in the new governess though her stepmother, Jane Eyre warns her against seeking or imposing personal intimacy in her employees. Ironically, Jane Eyre herself sought emotional intimacy in her employer, and accepted his proposal of marriage although Mrs. Fairfax had warned her against such aspirations above one’s stations.

Adele learns that her mother was alive only at a later stage in her life. While she could not fathom the reason why her mother gave her up, she was also grateful for the life she would not have received otherwise. She was judgemental of her mother’s profession and furious that she betrayed her father’s trust, only to learn later from Grace that Celine Varens was a lot more than what Adele had perceived her to be.

Adele is vocal about the rights of women which were not protected by the law of her time. She is disgusted by the plight of debutante women who attend balls in the hope to be chosen by men while men occupy the pleasant position of making

their selections. Adele herself was also not quite successful as a debutante because of her questionable birth which deprived her of the status of a proper lady. Families of suitors who wanted her hand in marriage either rejected the proposal owing to her illegitimate birth or demanded excessive dowry. Adele however marries Garnet against the wishes of his family and their union was not approved by her in-laws for quite some time. She was furious at her husband Garnet's reluctance to protect his newly wed sister Trina who was subject to marital rape and serious physical abuse. Though Garnet did not approve of Trina's husband Hamish's ways, he believed what Hamish did was "within his rights" (296) and according to law, his actions would not be sufficient grounds for a divorce (296).

From a post-colonial perspective, while Brontë's portrayal of Adele is problematic, so is Moise's Adele's attitude on colonialism. Adele's characterization as the bastard child of a French courtesan who is rescued from the dirt of France is heavily stereotypical. As a child, much to the likeness of her mother, Adele is described as eager for glamour and obsessed with her looks, clothes, and jewellery. Jane Eyre's mission had been to transform Adele into a docile, good tempered and well principled English lady and to bestow her with sound English education that would correct her French defects. In Moise, however, Adele grows up to be an advocate of benevolent colonialism in her observation that the British empire sends only the best civil servants to India post the mutiny of 1857 to establish "a government worthy of Britain and India" (111). She held the belief that the disbanding of the East India Company and the institution of civil authority in India made good results. She appears to be proud of the civilising mission of Britain and

expresses her confidence that their continued efforts to resolve cultural conflicts will come to benefit all, though she is also mindful that the civilization of India is much older than theirs and that the colony has its own literature and art (217). Adele lives to see the world change with more women getting educated, universities admitting women, doing jobs of their interest and is content that she could herself live the best of her own time.

Adele's challenges as a woman were remarkably different from those of Grace Poole and Celine Varens. Brontë presents Grace Poole as a character with virtually no past or future, charged with providing an adequate dose of gothic in the narrative, with her mysterious role as a servant who is paid double, with suspicious mannerism and tone, and a frightening laughter that is initially attributed to her. Brontë presents her as a stout middle aged and red-haired seamstress who is one among Rochester's servants. Her character serves as a red herring to keep the secrets of the mansion locked away as she secretly guards the insane mistress of the house. Jane assumes that Grace is responsible for the wicked and eerie laugh emanating from the third floor, holds her responsible for the unsuccessful attempt to burn Rochester alive in his bed, and other strange night-time deeds. Jane observes, "there is a woman who sews here, called Grace Poole- she laughs in that way. She is a singular person" (Brontë,176). Jane is sceptical about Grace Poole's position in the family and wonders what influences Rochester to maintain her in the family despite having identified Grace as a threat to the same.

> [S]o much was I occupied in puzzling my brains over the enigmatical character of Grace Poole, and still more in pondering the problem of

> her position at Thornfield and questioning why she had not been given into custody that morning, or, at the very least, dismissed from her master's service…Had Grace been young and handsome, I should have been tempted to think that tenderer feelings than prudence or fear influenced Mr. Rochester on her behalf; but, hard- favoured and matronly as she was, the idea could not be admitted. (Brontë, 181)

In Moise, Grace Poole, born into the servant class, had no real prospects in life. Though her letters reveal that she and Rochester had a shared childhood as Grace's father had been the gamekeeper at Rochester's familial estate, she never aspired above her class or ever dared to rise above her station. Her letters reveal details of her closeness with Rochester and the ghastly years she lived in the attic of Thornfield. She exhibited unwavering loyalty to Edward Rochester who in turn treated her with great respect and trusted her with his greatest secret. Grace assures to never disclose the moment of Rochester's weakness on the night of the fire while he was trapped in the debris pleading to Grace to let him die, which he later believes to be a cowardly sin. Being entrusted with the task of caring for a lunatic, Grace's position at Thornfield was complex, as Adele observes,

> [G]race was like a grandmother to me but was far more than that to my life. Her place in the family was not defined by any of the usual rules- not really a relative, not just a servant, far more than a friend-a confidant to Papa such as few men have, someone who felt free to say things to him that even his wife shrunk from (Moise, 163).

A childless and widowed Grace leads a life of seclusion in Thornfield after she takes up Rochester's offer of the job, and her life is at ease post the fire at Thornfield discharged from the tedious duty of caring for Bertha. It was this solitude that instigated her to write back to Celine Varens giving her news about Adele in the beginning, and later about everyone in the household including herself.

> Only one hour in the twenty-four did she pass with her fellow servants below; all the rest of the time was spent in some low ceiled, oaken chamber of the third storey: there she sat and sewed- and probably laughed drearily to herself-as companionless as a prisoner in his dungeon. (Brontë, 191)

Grace Poole is the most enigmatic woman Jane meets at Rochester's house (Gilbert, 350). Grace had been the physical embodiment of restraint, while her occasional laxation in the quality through her indulgence in gin to relieve her boredom and frustration, the lapses that allow Bertha to escape and perpetrate various crimes in the household in the middle of the night, that eventually paved the way to Thornfield's doom and Rochester's mutilation. Rochester relieves her with a generous sum as pension and presents her with a cottage to live in. Mindful that he made her part of the hell that was his life, as Grace had shut herself from the outside world for the best part of a decade to be the nurse to the lunatic, Rochester's sense of obligation to Grace was too strong that he retained the role of her protector even after Grace was discharged from service. Grace eventually marries Septimus Richie, leads a content life with him at Harebell Cottage, and moves in with her sister after Septimus's death. Women in *Jane Eyre*, as Gilbert and Gubar observe, are mere

agents of men, and may be keepers of women. They are bound to their prisoners by the same chains. (350)

Celine Varens is yet another foreign woman whose immorality and deception are contrasted with Jane's chastity and piety, to construct the latter as a role model of a heroine. She is Rochester's former mistress and Adele's mother who does not make an appearance in the novel. Everything we learn about the character is through Rochester's narration of his experience with her. She is introduced as a character who Rochester falls in love with, who he described as a woman without "any consecrating virtue" (Brontë, 165). Presented in Brontë as beautiful yet fickle-minded, Celine Varens is doubly discriminated against in terms of her gender and her race. She can be referred to as the "fallen woman" in *Jane Eyre* even though Rochester once cherished what he referred to as a "grande passion" with her, a passion she professed to return with "even superior ardour" (Brontë, 165). Rochester breaks off his relationship with her after he learns of her true feelings towards him, after he overhears a conversation between Celine and her lover. According to Rochester's narrative Celine left Paris for Italy abandoning her daughter while Moise tells the event differently. Celine makes Rochester believe she died so that he would take care of Adele. Celine was certain that Rochester would not otherwise raise Adele as his own because he was suspicious of Adele's paternity. Jina Politi in "Jane Eyre Class-ified" makes a remarkable observation on Celine's representation: Rochester falls into the nets of Duessa – a French woman in whose person are concentrated whoredom, deception, wile, and immorality of the stage (84).

Celine's depiction as a sexually aggressive woman of loose morals and immense vanity strengthens Rochester's account of her deception and her release from his financial support. According to Rochester, Celine charmed the "English gold out of [his] British breeches' pocket" (Brontë,163). Moise presents Celine with character above Brontë's imagination of her as materialistic and sly. Being French, Celine was accused of promiscuity and the lack of sobriety. Celine is a carefully constructed foil to Jane Eyre highlighting Jane's desirable qualities and merits. The very action of projection of less desirable traits to the lesser women of the novel can be read as the affirmation of the Victorian stereotypes. Brontë reinforces the patriarchal order of the Victorian society by casting Celine as a fallen woman without blaming Rochester for his relationship with women outside marriage. The ideological function of Celine's character in Brontë is to embody the stereotypes of the Victorian society. In her analysis of fallen and other women as social evil in Victorian times, Lyn Pykett observes that Celine defies social order with her refusal to abide by the norm of "asexual state of married motherhood" (64). Celine lacks the four virtues, "piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity", the indispensable attributes of true womanhood, without which "fame, achievement, or wealth, all was ashes" (Welter, 152). Even if Celine's life on a different subcontinent is marked by independence and fame, it is a potential threat to social order and morality in Rochester's perception.

Social feminist theory criticises this projection and the representation of Brontë's independent middle-class heroine in contrast with women who do not fit the norm. Celine serves as a symbol for moral depravity. In "Pandora's Box:

Subjectivity, Class and Sexuality in Socialist Feminist Criticism", socialist feminist critic Cora Kaplan identifies the heightening of the goodness of the middle-class protagonist as a common Victorian trope. The representation of the Jamaican creole and the French woman in Jane Eyre as over sexualised, deceptive, cruel, and mad cannot be rejected as coincidental. Kaplan argues that Brontë projects and displaces on to women of lower social standing and women of colour, as well as on the "traditionally corrupt" aristocracy, all that was deemed vicious and regressive in women as a sex. (167)

Celine's character functions as a warning to Jane by presenting the repercussions of stepping out of the path of righteousness. She serves to warn Jane of the dangers of female transgression and marital indiscretion. Moise's Celine is a woman of many challenges. She is the loving mistress who becomes impregnated by her benefactor, Mr. Rochester. According to Celine, Rochester is Adele's biological father who drifted away from her after she announced her pregnancy. Rochester expresses doubts on Adele's parentage and casts Celine away from his life depriving her of the comforts he had showered her with. Devoid of money and protection, Celine stages her own death, and leaves her child in Rochester's custody in the hope that her daughter could lead the comfortable life she deserved. Over the years, Celine's body begins to betray her, and she could no longer carry on with her vocation of ballet dancing. She starts a small hat business, makes a decent income, and even adopts a child. As Grace Poole observes, Celine gave pleasure to all the folks who loved her dance, and the ladies she made hats for. She gave up Adele so that Adele could lead the life of luxury rather than dragging the child into her own

life of uncertainty and misery. She gave life to little Lisette, who otherwise would have ended up on the streets as a beggar, and above all extended the pleasure of friendship to Grace Poole, who led a lonely life as Bertha's keeper in the attic. (278) Celine's letters to Grace were vivid accounts of opera news, gossips, descriptions of holidays, narrative of the Revolution of 1848 as it played out in Paris while Grace's letters carried news on Adele, events at Thornfield, and her own personal life after the Thornfield fire. Their shared concern on ageing is crucial in the understanding of how the ability to work influences lower class women's quality of life.

In "Charlotte Brontë's Use of French", Elaine Showalter observes that the projection of promiscuity and madness to a French woman in Brontë is not coincidental as "(to) Charlotte Brontë, as to most of her countrymen in the mid-nineteenth century, France represented passion, immorality, and idolatry while England stood for reason, decency, and piety" (227).

It is no coincidence that the egotistic, uninhibited, and sexually aggressive Celine is French. To Brontë, Europe, particularly the "wholesome soil" (Brontë, 170) of Britain is the epitome of rationality and humanity. Presenting Celine as the "illicit, self-indulgent, and dangerous" (Showalter, 228) French dancer accentuates her fallen woman status. The immorality of the French dancer is presented in contrast to the morality of the English maiden. By establishing the difference between the pure English maiden and the French dancer, Jina Politi adds to this argument that in the world of *Jane Eyre*, improper discourse has no place while sexuality and insanity belong "abroad" (91). She regards Jane as the "pillar of the nation " who prevents an English man from falling into "French ways". Despite her

plainness, the well principled Jane is the symbol of resistance to the coquetry of the French dancer.

Beth Newman opines that *Jane Eyre* upholds Victorian conservatism and accepts the Victorian values and attitudes towards gender, race, and class rather than being critical of them (452). Brontës focus on good middle class women at the cost of racialised and norm defying women of the lower class or foreign women makes *Jane Eyre* a peculiar case for analysis of female independence and particularly intersectional feminism. Drawing on post-structuralist, post-colonial, and Marxist methodologies, Spivak and Kaplan argued that the feminism of *Jane Eyr*e was a "white middle-class feminism built on a series of exclusions of racial and class others" (Bossche, 53). They maintained that Gilbert and Gubar essentialized womanhood and considering the author as solely female examined how gender and the discourses of power fuse together. Spivak and Kaplan refused to exempt Brontë from the entanglements of the networks of gender, class and race and paved the way to critical commentaries grounded on class, race, and gender.

It is in this respect that Moise's attempt to give voice and story to three women of various social ranks and race; Adele, Grace and Celine, reduced to little more than stereotypes, proves conspicuous. Moise effectively explores the motivations of these characters and explains their personal evolutions.

An example of a Byronic hero, Rochester is a character guided by his impulses rather than his intellect. His life has been wild and dissipated but he still manages to steal Jane's heart despite the sternness in his manners and plainness in appearance. Though according to the Victorian standards, he might be naturally

superior to Jane by his gender, he was also her superior in terms of social and financial status. On an intellectual level, Jane was his equal. *Jane Eyre's Husband: The Life of Edward Rochester* (2011) by Tara Bradley centres on the life of Edward Rochester, one of the most compelling male characters in literature, and divulges his most intimate experiences of life in a vivid fashion.

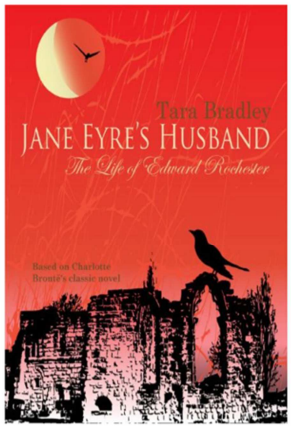


Fig 3.4 Cover photo of *Jane Eyre's Husband*

The novel takes the reader to the innermost working of Rochester's mind. The life of Edward Rochester has been heavily influenced by the property and inheritance laws of the Victorian society. Retellings from Rochester's perspective present Rochester as a victim of the Victorian inheritance laws and legitimise his nature, action and choices based on them. The Victorian laws concerning property and inheritance were very strict. A complicated set of laws and customs dictated ownership and inheritance. One's future status and wealth could be estimated at the moment of one's birth and these laws laid out who was entitled to own/inherit what. The law of primogeniture had the greatest impact on the lives of people of the landed class. According to the law, the eldest son of the family essentially inherited all the properties and holdings of the father at the time of the father's death. Primogeniture was a common law in the Victorian England which could however be superseded if the owner of the property chose to, through a will that changed the inheritance structure. If the owner dies without a will, his property would be subject to the law of primogeniture. According to consensus, all landed

estates of the father were left to the eldest son, with wills written to this effect, leaving a little to nothing to his younger sons and much less to his daughters.

Born as the younger son, Edward Rochester might have naturally been raised not to expect a fair share of his father's fortunes, his estates, or mansions. His elder brother, Rowland was considered the sole heir to the mansion and the estate of Thornfield. Since the younger sons of the family were given minor estates and property, we could assume that Ferndean came into Rochester's possession in this manner. The younger sons were also expected to provide for their future themselves by entering professions like the military, law, and the church. However, a prospective marriage was the most convenient method through which the younger sons could amass a great fortune. The younger sons were also encouraged to marry into money. Edward Rochester's fate was no different. His father did not want to reduce the value of his estate by sharing it among his two sons, and hence decided to leave Thornfield to Rowland Rochester in accordance with the law of primogeniture. Through subterfuges planned by his father and brother, Edward Rochester, who might have otherwise not appreciated the notion of marrying for money, was deceived into a marriage with Bertha Mason. He was enticed to go to Jamaica, meet the beautiful Bertha, fall for her, and enter a marriage with her. Bertha Antoninette Mason was the daughter of a rich plantation owner of the Caribbean islands, a former acquaintance of Edward's father. Mr. Mason wanted his daughter to be married to an Englishman and had arranged a substantial dowry for his daughter. Edward's father and brother were particularly pleased by the dowry Mr. Mason had proposed and hence tricked Edward Rochester into the alliance. Edward failed to

recognise the motivations of his family for the match until he was legally married to Bertha. As per the English common law, known as “feme covert”, a married woman’s money and property automatically belonged to her husband.

Under the principle of “feme covert,” a woman, upon her marriage, became one with her husband in the eyes of the law. Her identity, therefore, was ‘‘covered” by the identity of her husband. She becomes a covered (or hidden) woman, thus the French term “feme covert.” (Teachman, 159)

To protect the interest of an heiress, trustees who could control her property on her behalf were established. Since Mr. Mason made no such arrangement for Bertha Mason, her property passed on to her husband and stayed with him until their marriage was legally resolved. This arrangement was exceptionally convenient for Rochester’s father as he felt that he had provided well for his younger son, without having to split his other properties. However, both Edward’s father and brother could not have predicted that Rowland, Edward’s brother would pass away too early. Their father also joined Rowland shortly after. The untimely death of his elder brother and later, his father, made Edward Rochester the sole heir of the Rochester mansions and estates, and every property that his father held. On financial terms, Edward’s marriage to Bertha Mason soon became useless to him. Added to it was their straining relationship with one another which Rochester attributed to Bertha’s drinking and lascivious desires that culminated in her outright lunacy. Hence, the basic incompatibility between the two became more pronounced in Edward’s eyes as Bertha’s financial value also diminished. Bertha however continued to be Rochester’s legally wedded wife as divorce was not a feasible option in Brontë’s

time. It was extraordinarily difficult to obtain a divorce in the Victorian England as only an act of the parliament could dissolve a marriage. People abstained from opting the only available option because it was expensive in the first place, and a very public experience. Despite being rich, one would wonder why a private and reserved man like Rochester decided not to try this option. Even if he had decided that a public exposure would be better than a lifetime of marriage with his lunatic wife, Rochester might have had a hard time proving Bertha's insanity at the time of their marriage. Bertha was presumed to be sane at the time of the marriage and she had entered the marriage with Rochester willingly. Their marriage could only be declared void if Rochester could prove that Bertha was insane at the time of the marriage, proofs towards which were non-existent. Rochester was therefore tied to Bertha until either of their deaths broke their conjugal bond, and a bigamous marriage that he tried to engage with Jane Eyre was the only kind of marriage he could consider.

Though not the protagonist of *Jane Eyre*, Edward Rochester occupies a pivotal position in the novel and all its adaptations. In Brontë, Rochester is the dark, mysterious, yet alluring, master of Thornfield Hall and the object of the protagonist's love. In *Understanding Jane Eyre: A Student Casebook to Issues, Sources, and Historical Documents*, Debra Teachman observes, Rochester is an ordinary looking, middle-aged man with "ugly" features and a quiet demeanour coming on the heels of the "young, dark, and handsome Byronic antiheroes" (1). Rochester is older than most literary heroes, has lived for a significant time in the European continent and the West Indies, is rich and owns two moderately sized

estates in the country. He is the last surviving Rochester post the death of his father as well as brother. Although he is described as dark and brooding with an immoral character, Rochester is still presented as the hero of Jane's story with the readers longing for his union with the heroine. After *Wide Sargasso Sea*, critics have also observed how Rhys treats Rochester with sympathy and understanding, considering him a victim of the patriarchal inheritance law of entailment. Rochester is clearly the unfavoured second son who was dispatched to a colony to procure a fortune through marriage. Tara Bradley's *Jane Eyre's Husband: The Life of Edward Rochester* traces the life of Rochester with sympathy for his life's burdens while also legitimising his arrogance, excesses, and follies by transferring guilt to the other, essentially the women in his life. Through Brontë, we come to realise that Rochester was not favoured by his father at any point in his life and that he was even tricked into marrying a woman who had the seeds of insanity within her, ready to sprout at any moment. Narrated from Jane's perspective, we are provided with nothing more than glimpses of Rochester's early life through the accounts by either Mrs. Fairfax or Rochester himself. Bradley's retelling is unduly lengthy, vividly describing every moment of Rochester's life with minute detail, to the extent that it tires the reader. Bradley plays with sympathy and compassion for the young Rochester, the second born son of John and Elizabeth Rochester, whose birth marked disappointment in his parents as his father was unwilling to partition his family estate between his two sons, and his mother longed for a daughter, though it was "rare for a woman to be disappointed by the birth of a son" (9). Elizabeth Rochester was already exhausted by the patriarchal regime of her husband training her first born the ways of men. John Rochester disapproved of Edward's interests in indoor pursuits of reading and

music regarding them feminine, despite the boy also being active and athletic. In Bradley, Rochester grew up to be a good man no matter how later events in his life bend and twist his soul. Critics would have a different opinion on Bradley's statement taking into consideration how he treated Celine and the first Mrs. Rochester. However, if we analyse the actions of Rochester, we come to realise that for Rochester, it is a long story of suffering, loss of power and increasing dependence on Jane. This dependency culminates with Rochester marrying Jane after losing his hand and becoming blind.

Jane enters a marriage with Rochester with an equal or even a superior footing as Rochester is now a widower who is maimed and blinded implying that a woman's self- expression and independence are brought about in Brontë through a man's emasculation. She becomes Rochester's prop and guide, and their relationship is a curious blend of independence, submissiveness, and control.

Grace Poole is depicted as Rochester's childhood friend and confidante who later grew up to be his first romantic interest in his adolescence, and they acknowledged the "value of the other" in their lives (Bradley, 29) proving true Brontë's Jane Eyre's speculation that Rochester might have had "tender feelings" (182) for Grace, which she later rejects owing to Grace's "square, flat figure, and uncomely, dry, even coarse face" (182). Grace's character is full fledged in Bradley. She lost her mother at a very young age, worked to earn a living, and support her drunkard father, to be eventually violated by him. Despite Rochester's promise that he would come back for her after he was done with his schooling, Grace was mindful of her social situation and cherished no hope of union with Rochester. She

marries Abel Poole, a widower much older than her, after her father attempts to violate her and stays in a loveless marriage until her husband's death. Bradley suggests that Grace developed the habit of drinking to "numb her hurting mind" (37-38) from the traumatic thoughts of her father assaulting her and her new husband's desire for her body.

> Abel brought her a bottle, not of whiskey but of gin, the drink he favoured on the rare occasions he drank alcohol. Grace found that she liked it very much and it did not leave her sick in the mornings. Every night she would drink a little, in case her husband should want her, as he so often did. And every night, the gin would carry her away. (Bradley, 39)

The habit that she developed to get through Abel's attention eventually led to Rochester's mutilation and Bertha's death. Though the love in their marriage was one sided, Grace led a relatively contented life as her husband was kind and she had enough funds to run her family. Her only memory of a passionate embrace and kiss was the one she once shared with Edward Rochester and derived no bodily pleasure from her relationship with her old husband.

Rochester seeks Grace's help after his marriage to Bertha to come to his service to be Bertha's caretaker. Grace, whose adult life was dedicated to unremitting labour, takes up the position of the mad woman's nurse that in turn secured her a place to stay and a good income she could not manage otherwise. Though she might have been drawn by the implausible money Rochester had offered her, the real reason behind her willingness to engage in such a tedious task, and to be

Rochester's secret keeper for over a decade might probably be the tender tie between the two, shared since infancy. As Gilbert and Gubar observe, Grace chose to become the "public representative" of the mad woman (350) for Rochester's sake.

Bradley vividly describes Rochester's experience in Jamaica upon his father's instruction to learn the operation of the sugar business he has investments in, along with a clear direction to procure his friend Jonas Mason's daughter's hand in marriage. He is presented with a chance to leave Europe and live in the "other side" (45) of the world though Rochester feels unready to "face the mysteries and fears of his unknown new life in this alien place." (48)

His first encounter with Richard Mason, Bertha Mason's brother awakens the imperialist in him, describing Mason as "weak" and "effeminate" reinforcing Rochester's preoccupations on racial purity and masculinity.

Mason had an odd rhythm to his voice, a nervousness, as though he had had a childhood stammer and had been carefully coached out of it. He was about Edward's height but lacked his sturdy muscular build. He was slight, his shoulders somewhat rounded, and with a strange habit of drawing back after each phrase, as though cowering. (Bradley, 49)

Rochester views Mason as inferior, describing his look as unmanly and he becomes easily irritated by Mason's nervousness. Moreover, the desire for a "solid masculine companionship" (49) immediately kicks in upon Rochester's arrival in Jamaica. Similarly, Brontë's Rochester also projects the impression of a manly man who refuses to get the help of a woman when he falls from his horse and sprains his

ankle. He dismisses his injury as minor but upon realising that he could not stand upright on his own, he feels vulnerable, accepting help from a small, weak woman.

Rochester's observation that Mason exhibited "dog-like friendliness" (Bradley, 55) also throws light upon the prejudice of the coloniser according to whom the 'other' is less than human, or more animal-like. Rochester's thoughts on slave trading are also ambivalent as his conscience would not let him take part in any kind of human trafficking or ownership, while at the same time, he tries to justify the use of slaves in Mason's estate where he had investments in, reassuring himself that the slaves there were "well-fed, well- kept and not abused" (Bradley, 72).

Rochester believes that he was duped to marry Bertha, who was around five years older than him, and in whose blood ran the germs of insanity that were slowly winning her over. Bertha's sexuality deeply disturbs Rochester as he believes that she has been sexually involved with others prior to their marriage and continues to go astray after. He regards her as deceitful, amorous and with a turn of mind that could not stay on track for any intelligent discussion. Unlike Brontë's Rochester whose detailing of Bertha's madness and irrationality is in the form of short paragraphs of recollections, Bradley presents Rochester as a victim of Bertha's promiscuity and insanity in accounts stretching over many chapters. She brings in numerous episodes of Bertha's indulgences with several men culminating in her being abused and violated by a group of men. This episode is used as a legitimization of Rochester taking control of the Mason household and restraining Bertha.

> Edward left the room, stopping to talk to Richard. “She will recover, but things will change. I am still her husband. She will be confined. She may be committed, should I so choose. I don’t know yet; but I am taking control, and from now on I will act as I feel are in her best interests, instead of listening to others. (Bradley, 74)

Upon taking control, Rochester, who was repulsed by the rituals of the servants of the household, tries to suppress the heathen and superstitious practices of the ‘other’. He is drawn to a servant of the household who was smaller and delicate unlike Bertha who was “as tall as he” and “full bodied” suggestive of Rochester’s apparent fear of Bertha as a potential competent to his agency and power.

Bradley thereafter resorts to narrating in graphic detail Rochester’s indulgences in mistresses across Europe after he stations Bertha in the attic of his mansion. He sought mistresses to relieve his physical passions temporarily. As Brontë observes, Rochester’s fixed desire was to “seek and find a good and intelligent woman” (357) who contrasted the “fury” that he left behind at Thornfield. He seeks solace in Celine Varens, an opera dancer in France, who according to Rochester did not have the look of a woman who had “resolved to belong to only one man” (Bradley, 100). Rochester grows suspicious of Celine’s faith despite providing her with a fine establishment to live and showering her with expensive presents. Celine however is presented as a woman who cared for her independence and as someone who would not agree to the idea of being owned by someone. She was talented, deserved the adulation of her audience and became distant from Rochester as his attempts to own her grew stronger. However, Rochester also

regarded Celine as inappropriate to be presented before a “genteel English society” (101), that included his English friends, because of her foreign ways. When Celine becomes pregnant with Adele, Rochester doubts the child’s paternity as he had been away from Celine at the time she supposedly conceived and Adele’s birth which Celine referred to as premature seemed untrue to Rochester as the child appeared healthy and full term. In Bradley, Rochester leaves Celine after he discovers her with her lover, making spiteful remarks about his looks and unwavering attention.

Rochester tried the companionship of many more mistresses like Giacinta, and Clara which is presented as a passing reference in Brontë, “She [Celine] had two successors: an Italian Giacinta, and a German, Clara; both considered singularly handsome.” (Brontë’, 359). Giacinta is described as unprincipled and violent while Clara is heavy, mindless, and unimpressive. (359) Bradley elaborates on Rochester’s experience with mistresses adding more women to the list.

> Then Evangeline, then Céline. After Céline came Olga in St. Petersburg and my short liaison with her. (…) Then came the wretched widow, whose name I cannot even recall. Then Giacinta, who plunged me into an even deeper disgust with myself and brought me as close as I have ever been to total degradation (…) And finally Clara, my seventh. There was a quick anonymous liaison here and there, mostly when I was at a party and drunk, but these were few and far between and I can scarcely remember them. (Bradley, 257)

Bradley’s Rochester always incriminated women for his loose morals, vices, and self-destructive attitudes. He disapproves of Giacinta as she was wild, reckless,

dangerous, and involved with other men (144) and leaves her as she was volatile, hot tempered and insatiable, like Bertha minus her insanity. Though honest and kind, Clara is described as boring, and unimpressive. Bradley's Rochester openly admits his desire for a "quiet, passive, non-demanding woman" (175) as he was drained by Bertha's insanity, Celine's betrayal, and Giacinta's eccentricity. Rochester was repulsed by Blanche's pride and self- importance, and considered her inconsiderate, spiteful, and shallow.

As Wolfgang G. Muller observes, for Rochester, "there is an ominous potential for deceit in connection with sexuality." (69) In Brontë, Rochester refrains from being honest about his affair with Celine and leaves his relationship to Adele – daughter or ward – unclear. He flirts with Blanche to make Jane jealous. Jane's virginity seemed a matter of attraction to Rochester despite his innumerable liaisons with mistresses around the world. He firmly believed that her "innocence and purity" would "cleanse and purify" him. (258) Jane became the eligible candidate for Rochester's love as she was also intelligent, affectionate, and genuine. She was the "lamb" he would not dare leave unguarded near the "wolf's den", while the latter noun was attributed to his locked away insane wife. Rochester assures himself that tricking Jane into a marriage was not a sin, as any "thinking and sophisticated woman" (241) would look at his marriage to Bertha and agree that it was in fact he who was tricked. He uses this logic to deceive Jane into believing that he was unmarried, and to breach the conventions of both morality and law. In Brontë, Rochester's justification of his intention to marry Jane, "I wanted her just as a change after the fierce ragout" (339), on the contrary is denigrating and frivolous, implying that Bradley's Rochester had a better respect for Jane than Brontë's. But

he had no regard for Jane's right for truth and pushes her into the abyss of cunning lies and silent deception, the crimes he believed his own father committed to him and intended to do to Jane the same trickery his father foisted upon him. Rochester's incrimination of women can also be observed in the Thornfield fire episode where he believes that the fire was the effect of an evil and vicious spell cast on him by Bertha's nanny years ago, that has left him blind, maimed and scarred for life.

Rochester's toxic masculinity makes him use the threat of violence to make Jane listen to him after she becomes clearly indifferent to Rochester's speech after the aborted wedding ceremony.

> 'Jane! will you hear reason?' (he stooped and approached his lips to my ear) 'because, if you won't, I'll try violence.' His voice was hoarse; his look that of a man who is just about to burst an insufferable bond and plunge headlong into wild licence. (Brontë, 349)

Jessica Cox, in "I'll try violence: Patterns of Domestic Abuse in Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre (1847)" argues that *Jane Eyre* has patterns of domestic violence in the form of threats, coercive control and actual violence, that are overshadowed by the emphasis on romantic love (324). Through the analysis of Rochester's intimate relationship with Bertha, Celine and Jane, Cox contends that the apparent happy-ever-after conclusion opens a possible arena of future domestic abuse for Jane (327). The desire for control is clear in Rochester's character. Owing to her alleged mental illness, Rochester locks Bertha in a windowless attic in the third storey of his mansion, for a period of ten years, which can be read as a clear sign of abuse despite

his reassurance that he “safely lodged” (Brontë, 356) her without sending her away to a mental asylum that treated patients severely and mercilessly.

Control and abuse can also be read in Rochester’s relationship with Celine, one in which he generously installed her in an extravagant hotel, loaded her with gifts and provided her with servants and a carriage. His unannounced call on Celine is suggestive of his attempt to monitor her movements, and he terminates the relationship after he sees her with another man. He releases her from his “protection” and “left a bullet in one of his [Celine’s lover’s] poor etiolated arms” (Brontë, 169). Bertha and Celine’s narrative silence allows Rochester to control the version of events as he presents it to Jane. Readers are also persuaded to believe the account of the possible abuser in the relationships and overlook the evidence of abuse.

Through the adaptation, Bradley attempts to reconcile both the aspects of Rochester’s character that appealed to readers like his passion, intelligence, humour and deep capacity for love along with his unfavourable traits like pride, arrogance, deception, and self-absorption. She attempts to address the myriad questions lurking within Brontë’s narrative and extends her interest to neglected characters like Grace Poole, who is a contemporary to Rochester in Brontë, though depicted as an old woman in most adaptations.

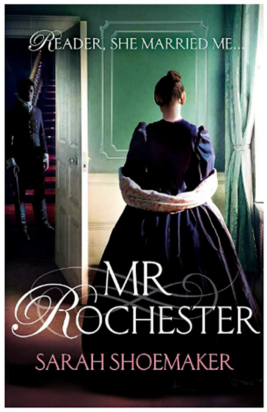


Fig 3.5 Cover photo of *Mr. Rochester*

The character of Edward Rochester has a mixed reputation among modern day *Jane Eyre* readers. To some, he is a euphoric male lead and for some others, he is deeply

problematic, largely for his treatment of his mentally ill wife in the attic and his imperialistic attitudes, so prominent during his time in Jamaica as a plantation owner. American author Sarah Shoemaker's *Mr. Rochester* (2017) is unapologetic in presenting Rochester as flawed, yet redeemable, whose flaws stem from his immediate circumstances and a troubled childhood. A former university librarian and author of three other books; *Long Chain of Death, The Harbinger Effect, MacKinnon's Machine,* Shoemaker in this novel fleshes out the early years of Rochester's life prior to his meeting with Jane Eyre. Rather than adopting a modern prose style, the cadence and pacing of Shoemaker's narrative style is reminiscent of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. Linear in chronology and structured in three parts, *Mr. Rochester* explores Edward Rochester's youth, his early years in Jamaica, and his eventual return to England where he meets Jane for the first time.

The first part of the novel traces Rochester's growth and development under George Howell Rochester, his unyielding and stern father; Mr. Lincoln, an eccentric teacher at Black Hill School; and Mr. Wilson, a fatherly mentor at Maysbeck Mill where Rochester worked as an apprentice to gain his share of experience on tending to the affairs of a business in order to prepare himself to be in charge of his own businesses in the future. Shoemaker's Rochester is a young and vulnerable creature, motherless, largely neglected and solitary, who roams around the corridors of Thornfield Hall and its stable yards. She presents a convincing picture of Rochester's bildungsroman, similar in fashion to the one Charlotte Brontë offered in *Jane Eyre* through her vivid accounts on Jane's early life at the Reeds, and then at Lowood. Rochester is sent away to school at the age of eight, which in a way serves as a means of his banishment from Thornfield, as being the second son of the family, Thornfield rightfully belonged to his cold and distant brother, Rowland Rochester.

Edward eventually learns that his inheritance lies in the languid shores of Jamaica, a place he has been fascinated ever since his school days. Edward begins his journey across England, making friends and enemies in the process and eventually finds himself at Cambridge, as a student of law, by the decree of his father. The longing for affection and desperation for approval from his father informs much of Rochester's actions in the future. He forms new connections in life, most of them getting severed permanently and unexpectedly, such as the death of his childhood friends at Black Hill school, nicknamed Touch and Carrot, his strained attempt at love with Alma, a young girl who worked at Mr. Wilson's mill, and his failed attempt at courting and marrying Miss Alice Philips, before he sets out to Cambridge. The second part of the novel shows Rochester tangled in his dubious business at a sugar plantation in Jamaica and his love affair with the town's most ravishing beauty, Bertha Antoinette Mason, both of which were planned and indirectly executed by his own father, without a slight consideration of the former's desires or preferences. Edward matures around the slave population in Jamaica and marries Bertha, to become a victim of betrayal and plotting by his own father for money and other assets. Prior to sending him away to Jamaica, his father enlightens Edward of slavery in the island.

> Life in Jamaica is very different from here. Slaves do everything. I mean everything. If you drop your napkin from your lap, if you want a book from the other side of the room, from the time you dress in the morning until your bed covers are turned down for you at night, slaves will follow along behind to do what you have always done for yourself. It will take time to acclimatize yourself to all of that, to say nothing of the climate itself. (Shoemaker, 134)

While owning slaves is entirely consistent with someone of Edward Rochester's time, class, and race, his position about slavery remains highly ambivalent throughout. While he observes that owning slaves is an "uncomfortable proposition", he "could not avoid becoming dependent upon the work of slaves" (Shoemaker, 166). Though, internally he cares for his slaves, Rochester transforms into a slave owner, for whom slavery is both morally degrading and financially convenient. Similar is his standpoint on the use of violence against slaves. He never fully confronts the horrors of slavery, but expresses some discomfort at the brutality of punishments delivered on behalf of him and other slave landowners:

> The one weapon the whites had against the negroes was fear. A negro late to the field received ten lashes; a negro who tried to escape was beheaded and his head placed on a pole at the side of the road as a warning. Does not the effect of unlimited power and the frequent witnessing of such severe punishment tend to harden the heart? Yes, I found, it does, although the whites of the West Indies would have said it is an unfortunate truth that must be accepted, for there is no way to grow and harvest sugar without it. But there is also no doubt that such power destroys the souls of those who wield it every bit as much as it destroys the bodies and spirits of those who suffer under it, and I was no exception, for I too easily slid into acceptance of the way of life of a Jamaican planter. (Shoemaker, 203)

Despite his moral inclinations, Rochester soon transforms into a conventional white slave owner, unwilling to jeopardise his relationship with his father and thereby please him in the process. He soon marries Bertha, in an arranged

marriage, and Shoemaker makes it evident from the start that their relationship would be short-lived. Bertha is presented as capricious, and troubled, with mood swings and occasional bouts of self-harm, interspersed with episodes of hallucinations and confusion. Rochester recalls, “She often had hallucinations—some were garbled and full of fantasy; others were clear.” (Shoemaker, 208) The racial and gender gap between Bertha and Rochester further deteriorates her condition along with Rochester’s reluctance to impregnate her owing to her questionable mental condition. Typical of Brontë’s Rochester, Shoemaker’s Rochester also reads Bertha’s madness along the lines of local religious practices and attachment to the black female servants of her household. In part three of the novel, Edward eventually returns to Thornfield with his mentally unstable wife and keeps her locked up in the attic. His decision to keep Bertha confined is presented to highlight Rochester’s high morals as he could have conveniently divorced her by providing the church two witnesses of Bertha’s adultery. Rochester believes that he would become a lesser man if he broke his wedding vow to care for his wife and chose not to abandon Bertha. Rochester confesses to Dr. Carter about having thoughts of divorce but is mindful that he cannot prove Bertha’s adultery due to lack of witnesses, despite her immoral ways, and hence his insistence on protecting Bertha can be considered a fake consideration for both Bertha and his vows.

> “Have you thought of divorce?” Carter asked me once.
>
> I had; I confess. But Parliament allowed divorce only if the man had two witnesses to his wife’s adultery, and—while Bertha had surely been no angel at those Jamaican balls—I had no such witnesses to bring forth. So I simply said, “I promised I would not abandon her.”

> And what kind of man would I be if I did not keep my vows? (Shoemaker, 273)

He ultimately hires Jane Eyre to care for his ward and the novel follows the course of the original text after Jane's arrival at Thornfield. The final section is a straightforward retelling of the source material from Rochester's perspective, in which both Jane and Rochester begin to speak Brontë's original dialogues, a change that feels both unnatural, forced, and sudden. Moreover, Shoemaker's portrayal of Rochester earlier as an obedient, and lonely little boy, and an insecure man and hapless victim of vicious plotting and fate, makes Rochester's characterisation unconvincing in the final section of the novel, particularly in the episode of the gathering at Thornfield where he is seen flirting with Blanche Ingram and thereafter in his irresistible dynamism as the Byronic hero Charlotte Brontë envisioned. The unchallenging child and young man lacks the charisma of the original. However, Shoemaker has in fact fairly succeeded in translating her passion for Brontë's fascinating hero, whom she describes as "the most romantic, complex and mysterious of literary heroes" in the introduction to the novel, *Mr. Rochester*.

Cora Holmes' retelling of *Jane Eyre* from Rochester's perspective, *Rochester: A Memoir* (2017) captures the nuances of the character of *Jane Eyre*'s mysterious, enigmatic, and brooding master. Holmes is a writer who has lived in Aleutian Islands off the coast of Alaska for a considerable part of her life and has penned four non-fiction books about Aleutians. In *Rochester*,

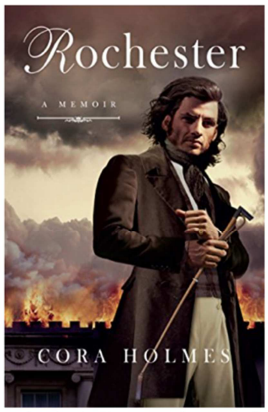


Fig 3.6 Cover photo of *Rochester*

Holmes reimagines Rochester's conflicted pursuit of love and his twisted fate from the character's perspective. With unflinching honesty, the novel narrates Rochester's version of the story giving us insights into his barren childhood deprived of privilege and his tragic first marriage. The novel allows readers to traverse into the innermost compartments of Rochester's mind. It follows a non-linear narrative style and opens with Rochester's chance encounter with Jane Eyre on his way to Thornfield on horseback. Although he becomes captivated by Jane soon, he is constrained by the shackles of his marriage to the lunatic, Bertha Mason. In Holmes' version, Rochester appears to be protecting Bertha rather than abusing her as asylums would torment her for life and he was unwilling to let that fate fall upon her. According to him, the attic is a merciful alternative to asylums that torment insane souls. This is evident in his following reassurance of his decision to lock Bertha Mason in his attic: Rochester observes, "In a lunatic asylum the shackles never come off. Here she is cared for in as humane a manner as her condition allows. Here she is somewhat free. She is allowed even the fresh air of the leads on good days" (Holmes, 698).

Rochester is unsure of his motivation to keep Bertha locked up and thereby protect her as well as the other people in the household. He ponders, "Why then, do I insist on seeing her? Guilt? A sense of duty? Revenge?" (Holmes, 519) Despite being demented, Rochester believes that Bertha would recognise him and try to kill him for separating her from her loved ones and homeland, one in which Rochester could have lived a comfortable yet unhappy life, with Bertha's dowry. However, the sense of betrayal had overpowered Rochester who regarded every other day in the Caribbean as an act of tormenting his soul. Jamaica, that he once regarded as a

"faraway place that beckoned with dreams and adventure" (Holmes, 595) transforms into his graveyard later. Never even in his bizarre dreams did Rochester believe that he would fall into such depths of degradation upon his arrival in Jamaica, as he was sold by his own father to rot for the rest of his life in the Caribbean through his liaison with a family with insanity in its bloodline. The trauma of the unfortunate marriage and betrayal by his own kith and kin was too much for him to process, that he never grew to forgive Bertha, Richard Mason, or even his long dead father and brother.

> The deception and filth she and her family dragged me through for four long years I cannot forgive. Nor my father and Rowland's part in it. They sold me for thirty thousand pounds and left me to rot in the Caribbean. If they had not both died, I would still be there because I was penniless. Bertha's dowry was tied up in land and slaves, the income entailed. I might live like a prince but only in Kingston, Spanish Town, Jamaica (Holmes, 526).

Other than presenting Rochester's recollections and perspectives on his own past, the novel also introduces new elements such as Rochester's management of his estate and assets, and his generosity as a master. He listens to their problems, complaints about injustice from local officials, considers their requests for extention of rent, permission to expand holdings and even loans for marriages (Holmes, 342). He is determined to do everything in his capability to prevent his workforce from migrating to America in search of work. In Holmes, Rochester is both passionate and dangerously attractive, as the author effectively captures his arrogant and sullen

manner, while skillfully portraying his tenderness and desperate need for love and companionship. The novel captures Rochester's passionate nature and inner turmoil along with his wry cynicism that is juxtaposed with his most vulnerable thoughts. In Holmes, Rochester, nevertheless, is a man who has suffered much in his life, and who deserved a second chance.

Edward Rochester: The Master of Thornfield Hall (2017) is the debut novel of R.Q. Bell, an emerging author of fantastic and historical romance. Like Shoemaker and Holmes, Bell foregrounds Rochester's perspective by presenting to the reader his endless search for love and desire to escape from the wretched fate that has tormented him for a decade and a half. The narrative is non-linear, and the language is updated. Bell portrays Rochester as a man of imperious and demanding tone, primarily to his employees and servants, a tone that his association with Jane Eyre later rendered polite, as observed by Doctor Carter (65). He is a man of conscience and religious sentiments. Like Brontë's Rochester, he is also unwilling to send Bertha away to an asylum and instead entrusts her under the care of Grace Poole. His conscience would not let Bertha rot in a madhouse like her mother. Rochester tells Jane:

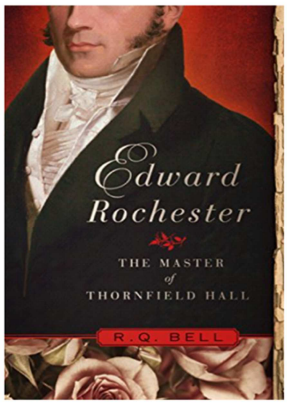


Fig 3.7 Cover photo of *Edward Rochester*

> I brought the madwoman to live here. Her father, you see, was dead. He had locked up her mother in that God-forsaken asylum and left instructions in his will to do the same to his daughter, should she be unmarried at his death. But I could not abandon her to such a fate. As

> odious as the memory was and still is to me, I once was her husband. (Bell, 320-321)

He chose to confine Bertha at Thornfield rather than in an asylum for her own benefit. On the contrary, we also see Rochester complaining to Carter how the brief confinement he had experienced caused by his sprained ankle has been testing his patience. He never seems to have second thoughts on how the "damned confinement" (64) is psychologically deteriorating to Bertha Mason.

Despite the best efforts on the part of the author to uphold Rochester's humane aspects, he remains cold and distant to little Adele regardless of her tireless efforts to seek his proximity and company. He casually pushes her away every time she approaches her as Adele reminds Rochester of Celine's betrayal. Rochester cannot stand the sight of the little child at times as he regards her as a miniature of his former mistress, which is clear in his observation, "She looked at me with her most innocent though coquettish glance. A thought of her mother flashed through my mind, and I frowned. It upset her at once" (Bell, 72). Throughout the novel, Rochester's language towards Adele is imperative, his manners stern and he exhibits a reluctance to receive her affection.

Ironically, though capable of dissipation, Rochester is presented as seeking reformation, even in his attempts to deceive Jane into a bigamous relationship.

> [for] the women I met had no interest in the kind of life I wanted. They cared only for the material comforts a man might provide for them. Repeated disappointment made me reckless, and so I indulged as if there was no tomorrow, spending wildly, gratifying myself with

> every entertainment. Society parties and dissipation became my chosen vices, Jane, *never* debauchery. (Bell, 321)

However, this attempt of the author to water down Rochester's indulgences with mistresses across continents fails to justify the means of deceit he employed on Jane Eyre. He simply did not waste the rest of his life in dissipation because he was tired of the wild decadence that reminded him of Bertha.

In conclusion, R.Q. Bell's Rochester is far from compelling compared to Brontës original Rochester, and even less compelling than the other selected retellings. He lacks passion and intensity, and his character has not been well established, primarily because his past has not been well expounded. As a result, the readers get robbed of Rochester's thoughts, impulses and motivations and the character appears superficial.

Jane Eyre's Daughter (1999) by Elizabeth Newark follows the life of its titular character, Janet Rochester, Jane and Rochester's imagined daughter who navigates society and suitors under the guardianship of Colonel Dent in the absence of her parents. This novel would serve only as a secondary source of analysis as it deals with the voice of a character originally absent in the novel, reducing the text to the category of a spin off rather than a reinterpretation.

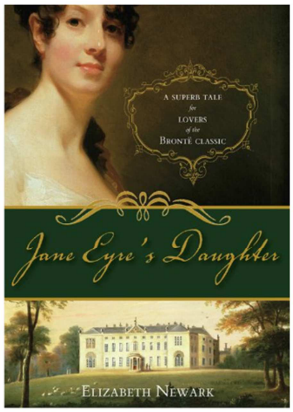


Fig 3.8 Cover photo of *Jane Eyre's Daughter*

Newark's novel moves briskly through Janet Rochester's early life at the rebuilt Thornfield, with her loving father Edward, peculiarly distant mother Jane, and

elder brother Oliver. Janet's relationship with her mother is the central conflict of the novel. Though she is mindful of the challenges her mother faced in life, she is critical of her mother's puritanical ways, prejudices, double standards, and self-control, while she idolised and wholeheartedly admired her father. Jane is also shown to favour her son over her daughter, which seems a highly improbable situation owing to her own miserable childhood and the neglect and rejection she experienced. However, Janet observes, "So I loved her in a somewhat detached way, keeping my distance" (xix). Jane is portrayed as a strong and loving wife, but an unfair mother, one who favours her son with attention and affection. She is cold and stringent towards her daughter and does not bestow her with warm embraces or tenderness. Though this portrayal of Jane might not sit well with Brontëans, this characteristic of Jane might be a deliberate attempt of the author to invoke in the reader memories of fathers, mothers and guardians who favoured or neglected their children/wards such as Rochester's father, Jane's aunt Mrs. Reeds and Rochester himself.

Young Janet inherited her mother Jane's talent for sketching and like her father, she is a natural rider. She gallops on wild horses across the moors. The novel sets to action once Janet turns sixteen. Jane, Rochester, and Oliver decide to undertake a long voyage to Jamaica, sends Janet to a boarding school, run by *Jane Eyre*'s Miss Temple, and leaves her under the guardianship of Colonel Dent. The action follows with Jane leaving school to live at Dent's, her romantic pursuits with Roderick Landless, which she fears is incestuous because of Roderick's spitting resemblance to her father, Edward Rochester. The novel follows the tropes of a regular romance with its dose of surprises, secrets, and revelations. The novel ends

with the union of Janet and Roderick, after the latter is revealed as her cousin rather than half-brother, the illegitimate son of her uncle Rowland Rochester. A common narrative strategy that Newark adopts is Janet's obsession with her mother's autobiography, with occasional references to other novels in the Brontë canon. Janet identifies in her father's library, her mother's journal in which she has documented every episode of her life beginning with her traumatic childhood at Gateshead, miserable school days at Lowood, her arrival at Thornfield and the events that follow. Very early in the novel, we see Janet's life echoing the events in her mother's. She is sent to a boarding school, encounters the pompous second generation of Ingrams, deals with an unbending and disapproving guardian, and lives in a mysterious house which seemingly hides ominous secrets. Even Janet's first encounter with Roderick Landless resonates with her mother's first encounter with Rochester, though it is Janet who nearly tramples Roderick with her horse. Roderick is her father's lookalike with a dark visage, high forehead, heavy brows, brilliant dark eyes, and stern features (89). Newark also evokes memories of other Brontëan characters through the careful naming of her characters from the works of Charlotte Brontë and Emily Brontë, such as Nellie from *Wuthering Heights*, and Paulina from *Villete*. Roderick's description of himself as a "gypsy, with my black hair and my skin brown from the sun" (177) and with his "dark hair and eyes", and "olive skin" that differentiated him form "those rosy faced, snub faced, fair haired young cubs" (178) resembles Emily Brontë's enigmatic Heathcliff. The title of the novel makes it clear that Janet's identity as a character would depend on the pre-existing narrative of her mother and Newark literally skews Janet's way through the familiar path Jane Eyre has already trodden.

Although Newark has attempted to eviscerate the gothic mode of *Jane Eyre*, with the employment of strange voices, forbidden wings, wild weather and storms, and an undercurrent of peril, it is sexuality and incest that reign supreme. As a young adult, Janet is fascinated by the passionate relationship of her parents, and she also fantasises about Rochester. Her admiration for her father can even be considered to have developed into what psychoanalysts refer to as the Electra complex, a psycho-sexual competition a girl develops with her mother as proposed by Carl Jung or a typical affection for the father which develops with a correspondingly jealous attitude towards the mother. (Jung, 69)

> What was it like, I wondered, to share my father's bed, to be held by those strong, muscular arms close to him throughout the night, so safe, so cherished? My cheeks would flush, my limps grow moist with perspiration at the thought. I would stretch out on the cool sheets and roll and flex my body like a cat. These things I could not talk about; they were forbidden. (Newark, xxiii)

In order to shift Janet's desire from her father to another man, Newark separates Janet from her father for a few years. It is also interesting that she falls for Roderick, who has a striking resemblance to her father. The fixation of the narrative on incest continues with Roderick's parentage kept undisclosed, with many speculating him to be Rochester's legitimate son with Bertha Rochester. Echoing the near incestuous relationship of Heathcliff and Catherine in *Wuthering Heights*, Newark presents a relationship between Hugo Calendar and his sister, Alicia. When

Rochester and Jane eventually return, Janet notices that her father has grown old while her mother remained nearly the same, apart from a change in her complexion.

> My father no longer stood a head higher than I. Had he shrunk? (…) Now, yes, at sixty-five he was growing old. (…) Now there was someone to contrast him with. Someone who looked as he had once looked: Roderick Landless. (284)

Janet's story, in short, is an uneventful duplication of her mother's life. Though highly intertextual in nature, this *Jane Eyre* sequel is far from transformative.

It is certainly the ambivalence of the author, in her representation of racial and gender identities, that has resulted in the proliferation of narratives that foregrounded the voices of the 'other'. In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Jean Rhys chose to present an alternate version of Bertha Mason's story precisely because Brontë never lent her a voice. Bertha is doubly discriminated in terms of her gender and race. Moreover, she is dismissed as a lunatic after being exploited financially, sexually, physically, and emotionally. Rhys built the foundation of her narrative in the blind spots of the feminism Brontë's text entails by neglecting the life and experiences of a foreign, mixed-race woman, transported to a strange continent, and locked up like a deadly animal. Bertha is the most striking symbol of Brontë's problematic feminism as well as inherent racism.

Following Rhys's tradition, Emma Tennant in *Adele: The Hidden Story of Jane Eyre* chose to foreground the life of Adele Varens, caricatured as a miniature of

Celine Varens, her French mother. The clash between national identities is evident in Brontë as she presents foreign women as either materialistic/promiscuous or insane. This applies to Celine Varens, Rochester's French mistress as well as Bertha Mason, his creole wife. Adele is also trapped under the debris of the prejudices associated with her French identity that despite being a loyal, spirited, and talented child, she is portrayed as materialistic, spoiled, and indulgent.

Rochester considered Adele's integration into the British mainland as the only way to purge her of her vanities. This is also ambivalent as he in turn considered Adele as a salvation project for all his past sins. *Adele* criticises Brontë's feminism which applauded the achievements of the white English middle class women while pushing to the border other sections of women based on their race and national identities**.**

Claire Moise's narrative develops by bringing to the fore the voices of the other women, like Adele, Grace and Celine Varens who work as supporting characters in the novel to glorify its protagonist. While Grace acts as a mere agent of man in the novel, Celine and Bertha are what Jane is not. Their promiscuity and insanity are set against Jane's virtuousness and sanity. However, Moise's opinions on colonialism are also not without problems. While she criticises Brontë's portrayal of Adele, Celine, Bertha, and Grace in the novel, she wholeheartedly supports the colonial mission of Britain in its colonies like India. Adele's character in the novel remarks that the East India Company in India works for the benefit of the Indians. She condemns the revolts in the colonies and believes that the population of India deserve the service of the British missionaries and the military.

Jane Eyre adaptations that retell the story from the perspective of Edward Rochester, the strongest patriarchal figure in the novel, legitimises his attitudes and deeds. Sarah Shoemaker in *Mr. Rochester*, R. Q. Bell in *Edward Rochester: Master of Thornfield Hall,* and Tara Bradley in *Jane Eyre's Husband: The Life of Edward Rochester,* exculpate Rochester from his misdeeds/sins, and legitimises them in turn, such as his indulgences with mistresses across continents, exploitation of Bertha Mason, attempt to betray Jane Eyre into a false marriage, being an insensitive benefactor for his ward, or for being an imperialist. Promiscuity, in general, was not a flaw for a male. His callousness towards Adele, his ward stems from Celine's sins, his decision to transport Bertha to Britain resulted due to her insanity, he never disclosed the truth of his marriage to Jane Eyre in the fear of losing her, and he was a successful sugar plantation owner in Jamaica who relied on the service of the slaves, because he had no choice. In short, Brontë and her successors project Rochester's faults either on to the people in his life, or social institutions. He is an advocate of benevolent imperialism, who argued that slavery is moral if the slaves are well clothed and well fed. It is beyond doubt that Edward Rochester was a true colonialist as well as an overbearing patriarch.

To summarise, the way any *Jane Eyre* character is viewed by the reader depends on which version of it they first encounter. Intertextual elements play a prominent role in how a character is read and viewed by the reader. It is impossible to read a text without being influenced by other texts that the reader has already read. Though all the select adaptations portray relationships between *Jane Eyre* characters in different fashions, it is the relationship between the hypertexts and the

hypotexts that makes visible their similarities and contrasts. Being a story that provides a "pattern for countless others" (Gilbert, 338), the novel has generated numerous adaptations and diverse critical readings. The novel has been amenable to different critical concerns and approaches since publication. Readers constantly draw parallels between that original and its revision, while their reading is heavily influenced by perceptions and memories from the past readings. As Roland Barthes famously observes in his essay "The Death of the Author", "there is one place where this multiplicity is collected, united, and this place is not the author, […] but the reader" (54). Charlotte Brontë's strategic deployments of varied class, gender, and national identities create a space for numerous readerly appropriations which subsequent writers have availed. Authors of adaptations add more layers to Brontë's narrative that affect readers differently. *Jane Eyre* offers a chance for endless re-inventions and variations to authors inspired by the post-colonial, feminist, Marxist, and the psychoanalytic approaches.

CHAPTER IV

From Words to Visuals: *Jane Eyre* and the Hollywood Romantic Myth

Adaptations for stage and screen are often the best gauge for determining how important a novel from a previous century is in shaping the popular sensibility of the times after it. *Jane Eyre* is a novel that has been incredibly successful in becoming a part of the popular consciousness ever since the dawn of the popular movie industry in the United States. Ever since its initial movie production in 1914, no decade has been devoid of at least one feature movie or television version of *Jane Eyre*. The novel has enjoyed an incredible afterlife on screen in the form of successful cinema and television dramatisations.

The history of the *Jane Eyre* movies in the USA begins in 1914 during the era of silent production. The silent movie starring Lisbeth Blackstone, appeared on movie screens throughout the United States. This version was followed by a black and white silent version by Hugo Ballin in 1921 starring Norman Trevor as Mr. Rochester and Mabel Ballin as Jane Eyre. The release of the first adaptation of the novel with sound happened in 1934 and was directed by Christy Cabanne. Like its earlier versions, this was also pictured in black and white and starred Virginia Bruce as Jane Eyre and Colin Clive as Mr. Rochester. The 1943 adaptation directed by Robert Stevenson, had its script adapted from Brontë by John Houseman, and starred Joan Fontaine as Jane Eyre and Orson Welles as Mr. Rochester. It became the first full length film version of the novel and can be considered as a version that

is well-remembered by film viewers prior to the 1990s. *Jane Eyre* was first produced for television in 1956, followed by three television versions each in the 1960s, and 1970s, and one in the 1980s. The 1970 version that starred Susannah York as Jane Eyre and George C. Scott as Edward Rochester is generally considered to be a very faithful adaptation of the novel. The BBC production of *Jane Eyre* (1983) aired in both Britain and the United States, starred Zelah Clarke as Jane Eyre, and Timothy Dalton as Edward Rochester, and did justice to the work by devoting ample time to every major episode of the novel without rushing to its romantic trope, mainly due to its nature as episodes of a television series. There was a proliferation of *Jane Eyre* adaptations in the last decade of the twentieth century with the 1996 version directed by Franco Zeffirelli that featured Charlotte Gainsbourg as the adult Jane Eyre, Anna Paquin as the younger Jane and William Hurt as Mr. Rochester. 1997 also saw another television version of the story produced in England, starring Samantha Morton as Jane Eyre and Ciaran Hinds as Mr. Rochester. The most recent version of *Jane Eyre*, is the 2011 romantic drama film directed by Cary Fukunaga, starring Mia Wasikowska and Michael Fassbender. Despite the technology and times in which each of the above adaptations has been forged, they have won substantial audiences every single time leading to more creators expressing interest in adding more adaptations to the chain.

Ever since cinema established itself as a popular mode of entertainment, the process of “ransacking the novel--that already established repository of narrative fiction--for source material” (MacFarlaine, 5) commenced and continues. Film makers rely on novels for inspiration due to both a respect for the literary works and

for lucrative motives. The respectability, acceptability, and popularity of the source in its original medium are expected to be translated to the medium of cinema.

Brian MacFarlaine in *Novel to Film: An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation* observes that audiences continue to want to see what "books look like" (6) despite their complaints about the violations of the original. Readers constantly create their own mental images of characters and their worlds and are interested in comparing their images with the ones created by filmmakers. In the *Imaginary Signifier*, Christian Metz observes that in a film adapted from another source material, a reader sees not his/her own fantasy fulfilled but "somebody else's fantasy" (12). Regardless of the degree of gratification, reader-audiences serve as a persistent audience for other people's imagination.

The issue of fidelity has been critical in the discussion of adaptations ever since literature began to be translated into screen. This issue is often ascribed to an ingrained sense of the seriousness and respectability of literature to the other art form. Criticism centred on fidelity bases itself on the notion that a text renders to an intelligent reader a single/correct meaning which makers of adaptations adhere to, tamper with, or blatantly violate. However, an insistence on strict fidelity can lead to a failure in accepting that the process of adaptation is complex as it involves a convergence of various art forms. Critical notions on intertextuality look at adaptations in a more sophisticated manner. They regard novels as a resource and are concerned mainly on how the choice of a specific source and how the approach to that source serve the film's ideology rather than on the faithfulness to its source.

According to Geoffrey Wagner, in *The Novel and the Cinema*, there are three possible categories –-transposition, commentary, and analogy– open to both the filmmaker and also the critic who analyses the former's adaptation. Transposition is the direct adaptation of a novel into screen with apparently minimum interference (222). Commentary is where the original text is purposefully altered in some respect with a different intention on the part of the maker of the film which is neither infidelity nor an outright violation (224). Analogy makes a considerable departure from the original for the sake of creating another art (226). The critic, he implies, will need to understand which kind of adaptation he is dealing with if his commentary on an individual film is to be valuable.

Dudley Andrew, film theorist and critic, also reduces the relationship between the film and its source novel into three modes, which correspond to Geoffrey Wagner's three categories, but in reverse order to the adherence to the original. Andrew's categories are based on borrowing, intersection, and fidelity of transformation (10). Another prominent classification system comparable to the above is the one proposed by Michael Klein and Gilian Parker. Their modes are respectively based on a narrative's thrust on fidelity, retaining of the core structure of the narrative during the process of reinterpreting or deconstructing the source text, and finally, the creation of an original text based on a source where the source text is merely a raw material for the film (9-10). Though no category of classification can be regarded as a definite attempt or approach, they commonly exhibit challenges to the treatment of fidelity as a primary criterion of criticism and evaluation. Fidelity according to these critics is one of the many kinds of relations between literature and films.

The *Jane Eyre* film adaptations chosen for the study can rightfully be considered as transposition in Wagner's classification, fidelity in transformation in Andrew's classification, and core-structure retaining according to Klein and Parker. In the above three classification categories, there is little intervention by the film maker. The ten selected movies do not treat the novel as a mere source of inspiration but uphold the centrality of its narrative. However, this does not mean that they exhibit a blind adherence to the notion of fidelity. Taking into consideration the length of the source novel, and the times in which each of the selected adaptations was created due to constraints of time and budget, many adaptations disregarded certain episodes of the novel and condensed the narrative considerably. In the process of adaptation of literature to screen, the centrality of the narrative is imperative in the case of Jane Eyre adaptations as discarding the elements of Jane's life that are essential for her growth as a character, her life with the Rivers, and her eventual rise to financial independence in fact do not do justice to the source. Not many adaptations include Jane's life with the Rivers, some even tamper with Jane's character portraying her as restless and rude, and Rochester as a drunkard, and womaniser. Both cannot be regarded as an instance of the liberty of the artist but can be defined as violation or tampering of the source. Very few screenplays include Jane becoming rich through inheritance of her deceased uncle's money, and most of the adaptations revolve around the novel's love trope. No adaptation, in that respect can be read through the lens of fidelity, nor do they qualify to be commentaries or analogies, as they barely alter the source nor present a different perspective or intention. All adaptations on the other hand employed the narrative's first-person point of view. They present the events of the texts through what the characters

themselves see and experience. This can also be considered a prominent obstacle in the transformation process as the film medium can hardly present to its viewers a character's consistent psychological viewpoint compared to a novel. Though the cinema may be a more flexible medium in changing the physical point of view from an object or an event, it is less amenable in the presentation of a character's (first person) thoughts. To suit a cinematic narrative, directors like Cary Fukunaga choose to begin the narration at a later stage in the novel, the chapter in which Jane leaves Thornfield, and present the earlier episodes in the form of flashbacks. The success of an adaptation would necessitate such transformations. A successful adaptation appropriates meaning from a source text while matching the cinematic sign system to the sign system of its counterpart, a matching or appropriation which replaces the textual illusion of reality with the cinematic illusion of reality. A successful adaptation effaces the memory of the experience derived from reading and substitutes it with its audio-visual-verbal experience. It aims to achieve a perceptual experience that coincides with the one that was arrived at conceptually. The numerous complaints directed at cinematic adaptations of classic and popular novels themselves demonstrate how rarely an effective appropriation is achieved, though always sought.

In the reading of a novel, a reader constructs meaning by taking in words or groups of words from the text in the sequential order in which it is arranged in the pages of the novel. This linearity assists the gradual absorption or accumulation of information, action, characters, ideas, and contributes to the reader's impression on the same. In a film, the viewing time (compared to reading time) is limited or

controlled, and a viewer's experience of a frame following another is not analogous to a word following a word, in a printed text. Due to its spatial impact, a frame most instantly gives away information. Added to it would be the impact of the audio-verbal signifiers included in the scene. A frame unlike the written/printed word is never considered as a discrete entity and the fact that a reader is exposed to a multiplicity of signifiers in a single frame, or a series of frames also has an implication on the effect of a novel or its visual adaptation on its readers/viewers. Moreover a film also employs extra-cinematic codes (McFarlane, 28) that include language codes such as accents/tones, visual codes that go beyond mere 'seeing' to include selective and interpretative, non-linguistic sound codes such as musical and other aural codes, and cultural codes, that involve the information about how people lived/lives, at particular places and times. An adaptation necessitates the movement from a novel's dependence on written language codes to the extra-cinematic codes that function on a different operational realm.

An adaptation reaches not only those who are familiar with the source. There is a large, and varying segment of viewers for whom a movie adapted from a novel is of not much consequence compared to another movie which is not. An adapted film also functions on other non-literary, non-novelistic functions at work. The prevailing cultural and social climate at the time of a film's making is a major determinant in shaping a film/adaptation, especially if the film adaptation does not closely follow the publication of the source novel. This is particularly important for a novel like *Jane Eyre*, published in the Victorian era, with its radio/film adaptations having more than a century- long history of their own. *Jane Eyre* adaptations have

seen the evolution of the world with its ideals, values, cultural codes, and technology. Conditions within the film industry, the effect of the star persona, dominance of studios, genre conventions and the predilections of the director function as the other essential parameters of the cinematic universe. Whether or not a cinema is made through the process of adaptation, it is bound to be bent and redefined by these factors, thereby disregarding the primacy of the printed text.

In the context of film studies, an adaptation can be rightfully defined as the conversion of a pre-existing work, often literary or theatrical, into a film. Best-selling fiction and non-fiction, classic novels and plays, comic books, and so on, are regularly adapted for the cinema. Adaptations of well-known literary and theatrical texts were common even in the silent era and have been a staple of virtually all national cinemas through the 20th and 21st centuries. Adaptations are increasingly common, often sit within cycles associated with a particular time and place, and have contributed much to Hollywood and other world movies and are consistently rated amongst the highest grossing at the box office, as aptly demonstrated by the commercial success of recent adaptations of the novels of J.R.R. Tolkien (*The Lord of the Rings* movie series, *The Hobbit* movie series) , J.K. Rowling (*Harry Potter* movie series, *The Fantastic Beasts* series), Stephen King (*The Shawshank Redemption*, *The Mist*, *It*) and so on.

As observed by famous adaptation theorists, like Robert Stam, Deborah Cartmell, and Alassandro Raengo, the contemporary theories of media adaptation are displaying “a shift towards the era of trans-media creation by multiple entities and media conglomerates” (Stam 128-129).

Several questions centred on adaptations of novels or other literary materials to screen are significant. Are things lost or gained by people who substitute reading with viewing? Do the changes always have a discernible pattern, and do they give any insights into the effects of audiences?

Lester Asheim in his article, “From Book to Film: Simplification” contemplates if the vitality of the material and “traditional heritage of the intellectual” is lost to “popular culture”. Are the changes merely “form changes” which reflect the influence of the medium which do not alter the ultimate message conveyed, problems presented, or insights provided? (289)

These questions have been endlessly debated, by defenders of the film and its critics, by students of literature, of sociology, and of popular culture, and movie makers and movie-goers. The answers to them have been based too frequently upon highly impressionistic criteria, and broad generalisations based on predispositions.

The publication of *Jane Eyre* in 1847 heralded a new direction in prose fiction featuring a complex female protagonist. Charlotte Brontë, like her sisters, explored the issues of class, gender and status within the Victorian society. Told through a first-person narrative, her novel was an immediate success. The many attempts to bring *Jane Eyre* to life through film, television, and stage adaptations reflect the ongoing relevance of the novel.

There have been over sixteen English film versions of *Jane Eyre*, beginning in 1914 with the first of eight movies, strictly or loosely based on the novel, silent in nature. Despite taking place in Victorian England, the story of a young woman's

journey towards independence and love is timeless. *Jane Eyre* is an extraordinary coming-of-age story featuring one of the most independent and strong-willed female protagonists in literature. Since 1914, there has been at least one screen adaptation per decade. The years 1914 through 1926 witnessed the novel being adapted on screen in silent form with at least five movies which retained the novel title. Others drew much from the novel but qualified to be spin-offs in nature. The novel's discussion of the Christianity, social class, feminism, and romance which caused ripples when it was first published has lasted until today.

The course of adaptations took a different turn when the first movie with sound came out in 1934. Till date, there have been ten motion pictures with sound (television film and feature film adaptations) that are titular adaptations of *Jane Eyre,* along with numerous others of varying titles which served as prequels, sequels, spin offs, retellings, and the like of the 1847 Brontë classic. This chapter intends to analyse the ten titular film adaptations of *Jane Eyre* right from the first movie in 1934 to the most recent one in 2011.

Context offers a worthwhile perspective for analysing film adaptations as it reveals both their outside and inside influences. According to Marjo Vallitu, "context affects both the narration and the interpretation of a story" (159). If a work is adapted or interpreted, through a different media, in the process of adaptation something might have changed within, else the context must have changed. Hence, a movie and a novel that share a context will also share a frame of reference for their reception.

Linda Hutcheon in *A Theory of Adaptation* states that the context of adaptation has a lot to do with both the process of adapting and its outcome. In this process, change is inevitable, and its main causes are the adapter, the demands of the form, the audiences, and the contexts of creation and reception. In creating a work based on a historical event or a person's life, the authentic events cannot be reproduced. Instead, the audience always receives them in a mediated form. For the audience, film is adaptable material, like a text, and the events are re-enacted both in their memories and in a new medium (16-18). Time and space in society are important factors but so are the elements of presentation and reception, such as reviews. The way the story is received can change rapidly even without changes in cultural settings or temporal update in the adaptation (Hutcheon 142–5).

While studying adaptations, Hutcheon examines a variety of genres such as literature, films, opera, television, video games, interactive websites and so on and her inclusive approach entails both a fundamental and thorough discussion of the complex concept. She considers "telling", "showing", and "interactive" as the three modes of engagement that serve as the basis for her discussion on adaptations. She observes that each mode has its own specialities and no mode is essentially superior to another. In her opinion:

> A consideration of the differences between the modes of telling and showing, however, suggests quite the contrary: each mode, like each medium, has its own specificity, if not its own essence. In other words, no mode is inherently good at doing one thing and not another; but each has its disposal different means of expression–

> media and genres–and so can aim at and achieve certain things better than others. (24)

These three modes, described in terms of forms that represent and transfer expression from one mode to another include genres such as opera, musical theatre, film, video games, and so on. Each genre has a set of conventions that make it unique, and expectations of consumers are met only if adaptations meet the desired requirements. Each genre therefore deals in different ways with artistic devices such as point of view, interiority/exteriority, time and tense, ambiguity, irony, symbols, and silence.

Linda Hutcheon discusses adaptation in two ways: as a product and as a process. As a product, an adaptation cannot remain entirely faithful to its original text, otherwise questions of plagiarism arise. Adaptation must differ enough from the original text while still maintaining fundamental ideas of the source. She compares adaptation to language, stating that translations can never be literal because they are taken out of the context of their original language and therefore the primary source has authority and authenticity. Adaptation as a process becomes an act of "appropriating and salvaging" while trying to give new meaning to a text. Therefore, novelty gives adaptation its value. Adaptations are inter-textual and become part of the public history of a story. As a result, all previous adaptations become part of our understanding of all later adaptations.

In his discussion on the process of adapting novels to screen, Asheim observes that the practitioners in film production refer to their field of endeavour as "The Industry" (292). Every film is a product of an industry. The guiding principle

which underlies the major production decisions in film making is to produce a commodity that will sell, returning a reasonable profit on the investment.

Asheim rightly points out that the preferences of the audience become a primary consideration shaping the film product. Whatever immediate influences of "artistic value, story line, message and the like may prevail", the ultimate influence on a film is the audience (292). However, this influence is also mediated.

Asheim opines that it is recognized that the producer stands between the audience and the product.

> [And] that strictly speaking, film content is not a direct reflection of audience preference but of the producer's ideas of what audience preference is. But the producer's ideas are pragmatically established. Assuming that the audience does not consistently pay for what it dislikes…producers' use of the box office as a gauge of public preference is a valid and reliable one. Despite its faults, no more reliable guide to public taste has been found, and until one is discovered, the box office will undoubtedly continue to be the receiver through which the film makers feel that they can hear most clearly the voice of the paying audience. (292)

He observes that simplification is an important aspect of adaptations to screen and adds that though not all simplifications are based on the producers' judgement of the content and its reception, simplifications are mostly carried out to

avoid an “unwanted reaction” and also for “clarification of story line and key dialogue” for audience of varying maturities. (293)

He carries the discussion forward as he evaluates the nature of presentation:

> The nature of filmic presentation is an important factor, since the movie audience cannot, like the reader of a book, pause to digest a difficult concept, turn back to clear up a confusion, re-read when a passage is difficult, or dictate the speed at which he will assimilate the material to fit his own particular abilities. The sound film also adds complications: the lines must be kept within the limits of the actors' ability to deliver them correctly, and the audiences have only the pronunciation to go by, without the visual aid of the spelled-out words to assist them. (292)

Hence subversions, distortions, additions, omissions, shifts in perspectives are all parts of the creation-reception chain thereby justifying a film creator’s decision to condense or appropriate a source to meet the requirements of the target audience. *Jane Eyre*, despite its enduring status as a classic text, poses several problems for modern adaptations. *Jane Eyre* filmmakers must reconcile the desire to stay faithful to Brontë’s narrative and characters to make the plot palatable for its modern audience. Adapters must ensure that Edward Rochester retains the temperamental and brooding nature that captivates Jane, while also permitting modern audiences to view his sensitive side to justify Jane’s attraction to him. The characterization of Bertha Mason also becomes problematic for adaptations. For a Victorian reader, Bertha, Rochester’s mad wife, necessarily should be terrifying. For

a contemporary audience both aware of mental illness and revisionist texts like *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the portrayal of Bertha as a mad beast and Rochester's ill-treatment of his wife become not only terrifying but also repugnant. Adaptations of *Jane Eyre* have therefore conformed much to the elements of its principal text while also deviating from a few other elements catering to the demands of the times in which they were published.

Earnest Brontëans will hold that "Jane Eyre" films, cannot do justice to the Brontë masterpiece, or any other great literary novel, however good by the criterion of its own world. It might retain the same names for the characters, exploit and explore some of the same incidents, and attempt to faithfully reproduce the same atmosphere; but a complete translation from the "idiom of the novel to the idiom of the screen" is nearly impossible. (Andrews, 225) To these technical differences, a difference of motive also needs to be applied. Brontë strove to express her intense conclusions about the dilemmas and strains of life. A film director may have "artistic inclinations" but his foremost business is to make profit.

Jane Eyre, Radio Broadcast Version (1946)

The Broadcast versions of the novel accomplished the introduction of the novel as well as the Brontë sisters to a far wider public than what it had already reached by book, silent films or plays. The most notable of *Jane Eyre* broadcasts was created by Barbara Couper in 1946.

According to H.M. Raleigh in "The Broadcast Version of Jane Eyre", "brilliant performances by Belle Chrystall, Reginald Tate, and James McKechnie in

parts of Jane Eyre, Edward Rochester and St. John Rivers had such profound impressions upon “humble homes all over the British Isles” (35). Chrystall, the *Jane* of the radio was thought “too sprightly and vivacious” though this opinion is not widely shared. Through her calm, and sweetly modulated tone, Chrystall could only evoke occasional gusts of passion. Reginald Tates’s voice had the tone of command and McKechnie’s performance was so extraordinary that it left lasting impressions on the listeners. Couper made omissions wherever necessary without damaging the original, described as “rusty iron” shorn away by Barbara Ward in her address to the *Brontë Society*. To preserve the continuity of the drama, Couper skipped backwards or forwards several pages, resulting in a smoothly running narrative, presented in a form as both moving and intellectually stimulating. Couper's version for broadcasting of the “immortal tale”, as Raleigh observes, began at the end of February 1946, and was spread out, at weekly intervals, over eleven episodes, which has even penetrated into most unlikely sections of the society (35). This can clearly be shown by the letters that appeared in the press, nearly all approving and some critical. The 1946 article contemplates on the chances of the BBC carrying out similar experiments of adaptation of the novels of the Brontë sisters. H.M Raleigh expresses his hope thus:

> One thing, I am convinced, the broadcast has accomplished. It has introduced “Jane Eyre” – and therefore, one may hope, the work of the Brontë sisters to a public far wider than that already reached by the book, the play or the films. Is it too much to hope that the B.B.C., encouraged by the success of this venture, will experiment still

> further in the same field, and allow Miss Couper to try her hand with "Wuthering Heights"? (36)

Years later, we witnessed the BBC successfully adapting *Jane Eyre* for its modern readers not once, but twice, first in 1983 and then in 2006.

Even criticism paid tribute to the realistic presentation of the novel. Criticisms by its nervous listeners were generally centred on the early Lowood episodes, which were remarked as "too harrowing". However, negative comments began to fall off with the progression of the novel and the broadcasts were followed through its end with rapt attention by the listeners. Moreover, *Jane Eyre* readers had no disappointment with this broadcast, as generally most transactions from text to other forms generate areas of disagreement in the readers such as characters not conforming to their preconceived idea. Raleigh also observes that personal and social engagements were also postponed as they clashed with the episodes of "Jane Eyre" radio broadcasts.

***Jane Eyre* (1934)**

Directed by Christy Cabanne and written for screen by Adele Comandini, the first titular feature film adaptation of *Jane Eye* in the black and white era came out in 1934. Starring Virginia Bruce and Colin Clive as Jane Eyre and Rochester respectively, the 1934 version was the first sound and motion movie inspired from *Jane Eyre*.

Produced by Monogram Pictures, a small production company at the time with a relatively small budget, much of the story is changed; Jane is beautiful,

talented, and accomplished, while Rochester is kind and paternal. The movie is more upbeat and less gothic. Jane never visits her dying aunt or runs away to Moor House, but we at least get to see her childhood at Gateshead and a brief scene at Lowood. Not true to the novel and its bildungsroman narrative, this is one of the least honest depictions of Brontë's Jane on screen. Jane's difficult and traumatising childhood at the Reeds is totally left out and her orphanage days at Lowood are reduced to less than a minute. Contrary to the text, Jane is dismissed from her position as a teacher at Lowood rather than her resigning, as Brontë presents it. A scene with Jane and Sam (Rochester's man servant John in the novel) in which Sam takes Jane to Thornfield in a carriage presents Jane as rude and impertinent (Fig.5). Added to that is the instance in which she tries to control the horses of the carriage and later decides to step down and walk the rest of her way to Thornfield only to encounter Mr. Rochester on her way to the mansion.

The script also exhibits an urgency to develop the love narrative, with Jane meeting Rochester on her way to Thornfield, rather than meeting her master by accident only a couple of weeks after she takes up her position at Thornfield as Adele's governess. Sam Poole's immediate warning, "may I suggest that you keep your door locked at night" instantly foreshadows the mysteries in reserve at Thornfield. Edward and Jane's love relationship develops at a bizarre pace with Rochester falling for Jane at first sight. His appreciation of Jane's beauty and music is also totally against the narrative of the core text. Jane is characterised as choleric while there was also a visible attempt at white washing Rochester by presenting Adele as merely a ward, with Celine's name (Adele's mother and Rochester's former mistress) being not mentioned at all. Jane and Rochester's wedding scene is

absent and so is Jane's inheritance of her deceased uncle's wealth. Jane, rather than being a school teacher who came to a great fortune and becomes equal in rank with Rochester, is presented in poor, shabby conditions which trivialise her final reconciliation with her former master. She is presented as miserable for Rochester's love while he tries to drive her out of the room for turning her back against him and ruining his wedding plans. In the final scene, Jane begs to be accepted (Fig.6).

(Fig.5) (Carriage scene in *Jane Eyre*, 1934)

Sarah Fannings attributes this tendency to undermine women to the changes in the society brought about by the World War. In her opinion, Hollywood perpetuated retrogressive representations of women out of anxiety of female empowerment as women were largely displacing men in the industries that were

male dominated:

> Many romance films in the 1930s and 1940s were conspicuously retrogressive in their representations of women. The enforced fantasies of able-bodied masculinity and submissive femininity became the defining dynamics of big screen romance. Because women had displaced men in industries that had traditionally been male dominated (e.g. factories, ship building, machinery), there was anxiety that women were being 'underfeminized' by war. It became imperative, then, to remind women that their newfound freedoms were only temporary. (44)

By relapsing in former ideologies of gender through the myth of romance, Hollywood worked to maintain the sense of normalcy with regard to gender norms which were very much in effect prior to the World Wars.

(Fig.6) (Final scene of *Jane Eyre* 1934)

Linda Hutcheon proposes that the director of an adaptation is primarily an "interpreter who filters the text and creates a new piece of work". The director therefore is also part of the audience. Audiences familiar with the source text would consider the adaptation in terms of its intertextual connections to other texts. The audience is able to "overwrite" a work intertextually because the recognition of connections with other works is part of its "formal and hermeneutic identity" (18–21). Altering the real world of *Jane Eyre* can therefore be read in the light of the inevitable pressure of the cultural context in which the film can be placed. Despite being strong willed, majority of women characters remain caught in a gender system that trafficked in their desirability and availability for marriage. Defiant independence was always measured with respect to ideological behaviour and strong women characters like Jane, who was "a free human being with an independent will" (Brontë, 293) and her "own mistress" (Brontë, 501) was conveniently portrayed poor and dependent till the end of the movie.

***Jane Eyre*, 1943**

Jane Eyre is a gothic romance, but many adaptations treat it as a classic period piece and ignore the gothic elements. This *Twentieth Century Fox* feature film version of *Jane Eyre* remains one of the most iconic Gothic romances as told in the classic melodramatic style.

Directed by Robert Stevenson with screenplay by Aldous Huxley, Robert Stevenson and John Houseman, *Jane Eyre* (1943) has Joan Fontaine and Orson Welles in the lead. Ms. Fontaine who plays the older Jane, leaving Lowood to become the governess at Thornfield, with her severely sculptured face is a tenderly

appealing figure. Her glamour despite being disguised in shabby clothing conforms to the strict laws of Hollywood beauty standards.

As Fannings observes, “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” (44). Mr. Rochester of Orson Welles is “no creature of flesh and blood but a strange monster born of the movies” who “rants and bullies”. (Andrews, 227) Orson Welles not only helped to produce the film, but also starred as the tortured Byronic hero. With long shadows and a stark black-white contrast, the locations feel the way they are described in the book. Lowood feels lonely and oppressive, while Thornfield feels truly haunted by secrets bordering on the supernatural. Orson Welles gives a fantastic performance as Rochester, the flamboyant Byronic hero commanding every scene he is in. The supporting players are excellent without exception, including Margaret O’Brien, the lively little Adele, Sara Allgood as Hannah, the compassionate Yorkshire cook, and John Sutton, the doctor who brings a glimpse of sunshine into the bleak life of Jane at Lowood charity school.

Told in a constricted time limit, *Jane Eyre* (1943) stayed close to the plot of the book to some extent. According to Elizabeth Atkins, the success of the Stevenson adaptation is debatable. (54) The idea to adapt a spiritually rich Victorian classic into a two-hour long movie was quite ambitious. Distinction between good and evil characters and simplification proved detrimental to the theme of Brontë’s text. The writers in their attempt to condense the novel, edited out the ability and determination of women to be independent, financially, and psychologically, making

the screen play a momentary success. Jane's unexpected inheritance and the circumstances that led to her independent identity are edited out. The movie reassured the submissive and dependent status of women in the Victorian times, who strictly followed the conduct rules of the time. Their participation in the public spheres was limited and they were confined to their households.

Of the parts of the book the movie did keep, many were mostly accurate and were able to tell the story in a new and reinvented way. The Lowood school scenes were especially the darker part of the film. The scene completely bypassed the typhus fever epidemic spreading through the school and only focused on the death of Helen Burns alone. They skipped the part where Mr. Brocklehurst becomes a figurehead while his true power goes to the other empathetic and caring teachers at Lowood.Restructuring the purpose and role of St. John Rivers makes little sense from virtually every angle. St. John, Jane's cousin in the novel and the one who saught Jane's hand in marriage is presented as a kind doctor from Jane's childhood (a possible substitute to the apothecary Mr. Lloyd of Jane's time with the Reeds at Gateshead in the novel), who periodically inspects Lowood School (Fig.7). However, the central romance of the plot, and Jane's bildungsroman connecting her emerging adulthood to her childhood experiences fail to register. Major episodes from her early life were drastically diminished. Jane's time spent with the Rivers and her attaining financial independence were omitted entirely. The sets and photography help us through, evoking an effectively unfamiliar Gothic sensibility. The evolution of Jane's character and her growth from the "poor, obscure, plain" (Brontë, 292) woman, reduced to beggary who comes to a great fortune and thus

transforming into a lady with financial security and strength to resist a peremptory call to missionary labour in what might seem a loveless marriage, and her return to the blinded and mutilated Rochester is not of interest to the adapters.

Stevenson has translated the vividness and intensity of the novel into screen capturing moments of achievement, visual beauty, and horror. However, the movie moves from scene to scene unforgivably skipping some significant episodes from the novel such as the 'red room' scene in which Mrs. Reed locks the terrified Jane in the allegedly haunted bedroom of the dead Mr. Reed, Rochester masquerading as a gypsy, introducing Bertha Mason and so on. After the marriage is called off, contrary to the novel, Jane leaves to Gateshead to see her dying aunt Mrs. Reed and stays there till her aunt's death, an episode that happened during which Rochester entertained guests at the mansion while Jane was still a governess at Thornfield.

(Fig.7) (St. John Rivers presented as Dr. Rivers in *Jane Eyre*, 1943)

Dr. Rivers makes his appearance again in the movie towards the end carrying along a letter from Thornfield which Jane decides not to open. The episode at Ferndean is also skipped with Jane meeting Rochester, now blind but not crippled at the ruins of Thornfield with Adele, and Mrs. Fairfax. While this *Twentieth Century Fox* version leaves out Jane's recent inheritance, it protects Rochester's body from scars and mutilations. In Sarah Fanning's opinion:

> While aesthetically enviable, these images of femininity were politically, socially and culturally retrogressive for women. In fact, the 1943 adaptation seems predicated on a purposeful notion to undo all nuances of the novel's feminism. By exploiting the patriarchal world of the novel's historical setting, the film conforms to 'the patriarchal unconscious' Mulvey associates with classical Hollywood cinema. Consequently, the adaptation reverts back to a former ideal of society when men were romanticised as powerful, impervious and manful. In fact, much of the film adaptation works to highlight Rochester's machismo, as if any insinuation of Jane's independence would wantonly threaten his masculinity. (45)

The undoing of Brontë's feminism is most apparent in the final scenes of the film. The adaptation removes Jane's inheritance and thus deprives her of her independence and free will with which she returns to Rochester at the end of the novel. The writers also eliminate Jane's journey to Marsh End and union with the Rivers family, and instead make her return to the oppressive environment of Gateshead, an act which reinforces Jane's dependency. In the midst of drafting a

letter to Mr.Brocklehurst enquiring a position at Lowood, Jane is mysteriously interrupted by a storm and then by Rochester's voice. This summons reminds the audience that despite having left Rochester, Jane is still under the complete control of the man in her life. In Brontë, Jane returns to an utterly dependent Rochester, blind and mutilated. Although blind, the film does not compromise on Rochester's physique or masculinity. Evidently, this ending is reshaped to reassure Jane's ultimate dependency on Rochester's masculine hegemony and economic advantage to the 1940s audience. The film conforms to the patriarchal unconscious by exploiting the historical setting of Brontë that tried to prove otherwise. The film reverted to the sensibilities of a male dominated society in which Rochester is romanticised as impervious and powerful, thereby highlighting his machismo and side-lining Jane's powers as they would threaten Rochester's masculinity, thereby reducing Joan Fontaine's Jane to a mere disempowered descendant of the original.

First released in the United Kingdom in 1943, this film adaptation enhanced the novel's Gothic elements, emphasising the shadowy darkness of Lowood and Thornfield in contrast to Jane's purity and light. Despite having been shot entirely in a studio, the film was noteworthy for its atmospheric depiction of the moors. Based on a radio adaptation of the novel, the film focused on the romantic high points of the book and less on Jane's developing sense of self.

The last quarter of the book is reduced into Jane's reconciliation with her dying aunt, and of course, the final scene with Rochester. The expository titles create the appearance of being true to the novel's text, but were in actuality, written

exclusively for the film. The 1943 film would set a pattern for future adaptations as to which elements of Brontë's novel would be highlighted or excluded.

The movie's trimming down the complexities of the novel can be read in the light of Asheim's theory that films always conform to the constraints of the maker-movie- viewer triangle. Simplification becomes central to most adaptations. Creators most clearly hear the voice of the paying audience.

> From the evidence of the box office the producer has evolved a conception of the audience as a group who are, on the whole, incapable of understanding material aimed higher than the "fourteen-year-old mind." Though no scientifically gathered data exist to establish this theory as fact, past experience with audience reaction to the several mass media and the evidence collected through such audience pre-testing devices as the "preview profile system, the Gallup Audience Research interviews, and similar techniques of attitude measurement, have led to an acceptance of the idea as a working principle. (Asheim, 293)

The film works as a fairy tale story which qualifies to be a watered-down version of the source novel. The characters of the novel are reduced to good and evil, the influential people and role models in Jane's life are avoided, Jane's pronouncement of equality eliminated, Jane's psychological and material independence robbed from her till the end and Jane is conveniently steered away from her creator's precocious Victorian feminism.

***Jane Eyre,* 1949**

Franklin Shaffner's television adaptation of *Jane Eyre* in 1949, starring Mary Sinclair and Charlton Heston, which aired on CBS, was restricted due to time constraints, and being filmed on one set. This inevitably led to the removal of some major plot points from the book, such as Jane's time at Gateshead and at Moor House. It rushes through Jane's growing feelings for her master, proceeds into a quick wedding scene eventually called off, Jane's desolation and final reconciliation with Rochester. The only time we see Lowood is during a brief scene at the start of the film where Jane indignantly states that she has been mistreated and will never return (Fig.8). With a running time of less than an hour, the film fails to do justice to either the gothic or the romantic mood of the novel. Bertha's laughter, which could be heard from the second scene onwards, is a total distortion of the actual storyline. The movie rules out suspense and anticipation and leaves the novel lovers in total disappointment. Though simplification does not invariably change the basic ideas and intentions of the original novel, it does reduce their complexity and profundity, the richness of detail and analysis, and the scope of the material. (Asheim, 304). No matter how demanding the novel may be, the film is generally so reorganised as to state its major points alone. The film is deliberately designed to make no demands upon the spectator that requires more than passive acceptance of the material presented.

The first and most crucial meeting scene between Jane and Rochester at the moors is totally avoided with Rochester arriving at Thornfield readily after Jane takes up the position. Jane confiding her love for Rochester to the housekeeper Mrs.

Fairfax, also goes against the actual plot (Fig.9). This hour-long adaptation was part of the "Studio One" TV series, sponsored by Westinghouse, which ran from 1947-1958. Within that hour, the producers had to squeeze not only a full production of *Jane Eyre*, but also several Westinghouse commercials. Hence, drastic plot shortcuts were deemed necessary.

(Fig.8) (Opening scene of *Jane Eyre*, 1949 at the gate of Lowood Institution)

Within the scenes covered by this shortened production, significant changes are made, perhaps for the sake of simplicity and time. Jane and Rochester are being wed at Thornfield Hall rather than a church while Bertha gapes at them from her window. The extended high-society gathering at Thornfield is replaced by a simple visit from Blanche and Lady Ingram. After fleeing from Thornfield, Jane is alone in a windswept setting, where she hears Rochester's voice. As the film ends, they are together again, but we do not learn of their subsequent marriage or parenthood. The

movie portrays Jane as determined to leave Thornfield following her growing fear for the soon approaching wedding between Lady Ingram and Rochester and she decides to leave to Ireland on her volition, to be eventually persuaded to stay by her master by his confession of love to her and asking her hand in marriage. Once again, Jane's eventual coming to fortune is not attended to and she is instead portrayed as a lovesick woman who wanted to reunite with her beloved master. Moreover, Rochester is blind with no damage done to his physique.

(Fig.9) (Jane confessing her love for Mr. Rochester to Mrs. Fairfax in *Jane Eyre*, 1949)

***Jane Eyre*, 1957**

A rather strange adaptation of the novel, *Jane Eyre*, 1957 is totally distorted in terms of its story line as well as characterization. With a mere 51 minutes running time, Lamont Johnson's feature film portrays Jane Eyre (Joan Elan) as preachy and

spiritual to the extreme. She does not have a care for herself but wants to be helpful to Mr. Rochester (Patrick Macnee) in any way she can. The drunk Mr. Rochester is excused for his lecherous advances on Jane because she believes that he has had a troubled past. But after Rochester has tried to take advantage of Jane, he does fall in love with and gives attention to her during his house party. Jane's encounter with her master is hasty and she brings the wounded Rochester home (Fig.10).

(Fig.10) (Jane bringing the wounded Rochester home in *Jane Eyre*, 1957)

The gothic mood of the text fails to register with Bertha's disturbingly annoying laughter that is placed quite out of place in almost every single scene foreboding the reader of the doom of the mansion by some mysterious entity.

Mason arrives too early and gets interesting things to do in this adaptation. He does not get quietly stabbed and bitten on the third floor but he crashes down

some stairs during the house party, bleeding and terrified. There is no church scene along with the Thornfield fire happening on the very same night Jane left Rochester with her returning in haste. This adaptation fails to consider any event that happens outside of Thornfield. Much of the plot is shifted around, likely due to time constraints. For example, rather than being interrupted at the altar, Rochester is in the middle of his proposal when Mason storms in and demands he tell Jane about Bertha. Rochester is a creepy drunk who leers after Jane, and Jane is much less plain than she is described in the novel. Mrs. Fairfax plays a larger role serving as Rochester's confidant about Bertha and helping him keep his secret.

In Attebery's view, a bad adaptation second-guesses its source material and its creator(s). A bad adaptation pays no attention to the audience's reactions to the original. Remakes of previous adaptations that do not look at the source are nearly always disasters and adaptations also go wrong when they try too hard to be faithful and do not exploit the potential of the new medium. (395). As Attebery puts it, they go even more badly astray when the adaptors do not love the source. *Jane Eyre*, 1957 seems to be a perfect example of the third.

***Jane Eyre,* 1970**

Skipping Gateshead and going straight to Lowood, *Jane Eyre* (1970) directed by Delbert Mann, starring Susannah York and George C. Scott version still manages to show us the harsh beginnings of Jane's childhood. For the sake of time, many elements of the plot are condensed. This is the first version to show Jane's time with the Rivers, however, and it includes the proposal from St. John (Fig.11), both being important story elements that often get left out in other adaptations.

Through the portrayal of the central romance between Jane and Rochester, though not brimming with passion, Susannah York, and George C. Scott capture some of the most central elements of their characters. This 1970 version is an excellent production and is basically faithful to the plot and overall tone of the original novel. The screen chemistry of characters, combined with the hauntingly beautiful musical score, the authentic period costumes, and the picturesque English countryside settings, make this film a real treat for classic movie lovers.

(Fig.11) (St. John propsing to Jane Eyre in *Jane Eyre*, 1970)

Considering the change that was taking place in the society at the time, this film showed a more positive attitude regarding women. While the 1940s versions were characterised prominently as gothic and patriarchal, the 1970 version “tends to

downplay the strong melodrama inherent in the novel, focusing instead upon the psychological realism and emotional power of Brontë's character" (Riley, 146).

However, the apparently equalised Jane-Rochester relationship becomes another illusion towards the end of the text where Rochester's superiority prevails, and Jane subdues herself to accept a secondary position.

***Jane Eyre,* 1983**

Several adaptations of *Jane Eyre* have been produced for television, with the BBC's 1983 mini-series being among the more faithful renditions of the novel. We see key moments that are often left out in other adaptations, like Rochester masquerading as an old gypsy woman.

Jane Eyre was one of the first novels of the Victorian era that illustrated what it felt like to be a child, as seen from a first-person perspective. With the series, we get a fuller picture of Jane's time at Lowood beyond her friendship with Helen Burns. The 1983 series preserves Brontë's original text and most of the dialogue. Because of its five-and-a- half hour running time, there was also ample opportunity to explore Jane's experiences after leaving Thornfield and to further develop Jane and Rochester's slow-burning relationship. *Jane Eyre* 1983, starring Zelah Clarke and Timothy Dalton, of all the adaptations in this list, is by far the most faithful to the source material. Technically a television series, this version spans eleven episodes and details the events of every chapter of the novel. Because of the length of this adaptation, Jane and Rochester's relationship is given plenty of time to grow with the novel literally translated to the screen.

With measured dialogue and long steady takes, Julian Amyes' eleven-part BBC mini-series feels as intimate as a stage play. The episodes do not rely on sweeping exterior shots or clever manipulation of light and shadow. This adaptation is intriguing because it leaves more space for intimate character interactions and spends less time glorifying the Yorkshire terrain. This adaptation differs from others in its thorough exploration of Jane's childhood in her aunt's estate, Gateshead. Bessie Lee, the maid, is the sole loving relationship Jane experiences while living with the Reeds. The only other compassionate figure in her life is Maria Temple, a kind teacher at Lowood School. Their presence in the series is integral to the audience's understanding of Jane's development as a person. Zelah Clarke's Jane is sweet-tempered and accommodating. Her face is an open book, her eyes seemingly always on the brink of tears. Most impressive of all is Timothy Dalton's portrayal of the temperamental Edward Rochester. Upon formally meeting her, Rochester unkindly declares that Jane has not enough skill or science to draw well. Jane is not offended, but quick to take the sketchbook Rochester briskly thrusts at her. Timothy Dalton however does not have Rochester's shaggy black mane or craggy ugliness. In fact, he is rather handsome with his cleft chin and dark brows. Mr. Rochester exposes his history of moral weakness to Jane in a Shakespearean monologue. The focus progressively tightens on Dalton's face and captures each sardonic quirk of his mouth. Dalton demonstrates his acting range when he dresses up as the gypsy fortune teller, a scene taken directly from the novel (Fig.12). His voice becomes shrill as he masks his face and teases Jane. Other directors and actors have shied away from this moment. The choice to retain it allows a glimpse into Mr. Rochester's innate levity.

(Fig.12) (Rochester disguised as a gypsy woman in *Jane Eyre* BBC Series, 1983)

The series may seem old fashioned without the magnificent visual elements of more contemporary adaptations. Amyes carefully focuses on dialogue and character dynamics, making this adaptation an especially appropriate choice for those who have read and loved Brontë's novel. This is also the only honest portrayal of a Rochester both blind and crippled (Fig.13) in the history of *Jane Eyre* adaptations retaining Rochester's original dialogue, "a crippled man twenty years older than you, whom you will have to wait on?" (Brontë, 513)

Rochester's blindness and loss of a hand is a symbolic castration. In crippling Rochester, Brontë deprives Rochester of the masculine aggression, vitality, magnetism that had driven him forth so long. All other adaptations have presented Rochester stone blind though Rochester was blind, one hand disabled, and bankrupt.

This is set in contrast with Jane achieving financial security making Rochester dependent on her emotionally, economically, and physically.

(Fig.13) (Blind and crippled Rochester in *Jane Eyre,* 1983)

Scholars have long debated Jane's characterization as a feminist vanguard. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar celebrate the "rebellious feminism" (338) of the novel in its most influential criticism, *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979). Elaine Showalter calls Jane "the heroine of fulfilment" who "achieves as full and healthy a womanhood as feminine novelists could have imagined" (112). Later postcolonial scholars, such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, complicate these readings. They reveal how Jane's independent self comes at the expense of the colonised female, the other: Bertha Mason. Even as postcolonial readings question the way in which

Jane's bildungsroman moves from oppression to independence, they rarely question the proto-feminist consciousness as the endpoint of Jane's quest. Ultimately, these compelling feminist and postcolonial interpretations conclude by reading with the grain of the novel, accepting Jane, the narrator's representation of her own life as successful and fulfilling (Parkinson, 19).

***Jane Eyre*, 1996**

Director Franco Zeffirelli's 1996 adaptation is titled *Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre*, implying faithfulness, and inviting comparisons to the original text (Parkinson,18). Zeffirelli built his reputation on adaptations of classic texts, including *The Taming of the Shrew (*1967) and *Romeo and Juliet* (1968), but his *Jane Eyre* received mixed reviews from critics.

Zeffirelli's film reveals a rather vexed allegiance to the source text as it distances itself from Brontë's first-person perspective and takes control of the narrative out of Jane's hands, particularly in relation to Bertha. Narrated through multiple viewpoints, Zeffirelli's *Jane Eyre* represents key scenes from a variety of perspectives, destabilising the focus on Jane and giving added attention to Bertha Mason. The film also rearranges plot elements, creating significant disjunctions both between the novel and the film and between what characters in the film claim and what viewers see. The film plays well with the power relation between the two prominent women of the novel. As Parkinson puts it, most notably, the moment when Jane confronts Bertha and the scene of the fatal fire at Thornfield Hall re-imagine both women's positions in relation with the novel's power relations (18). In these scenes, viewers see Bertha not as the savage and brute that torments Brontë's

Byronic hero, rather Bertha emerges in Zeffirelli's film as a more rational and complicated character. The 1996 film is initially characterised by a sense of misery as it emphasises Jane's harsh childhood years (Fig.14). Although conditions at the school do improve in the novel, the film intensifies on the scenes of physical and psychological suffering. In this version, Jane feels guilty for leaving Miss Temple at Lowood, which is completely different from the event in the novel.

(Fig.14) (Young Jane at Lowood in *Jane Eyre*, 1996)

Director Franco Zeffirelli endeavoured to capture Jane and Rochester's emotional complexity. The movie does rush through some of the primary segments of Jane's life that do not involve Rochester, particularly toward the end of the film. Because Jane meets her cousins earlier in the film, she does not have to wander the moors, but instead simply takes the carriage to the parsonage to recover.

(Fig.15) (Jane at the Rivers' residence in *Jane Eyre*, 1996)

The filmmakers strive to balance fidelity to the novel with audience expectations. This adaptation opted for a more austere treatment of the narrative coupled with vibrant and scenic surroundings. The movie takes a different approach by starting off with Jane leaving Thornfield. This approach resolves the issue of introducing new characters more than halfway through the film. The new structure presents the bulk of the story in flashback, switching from Jane's past to her current situation with the Rivers (Fig.15). The reordering of the events allows for the two relationships to develop in parallel, while keeping the flow of the story intact. Without a voiceover, Jane must convey her inner monologues through gestures, looks, and inflections. Inevitably, the film must sacrifice nuances and character by heightening the intensity of their emotions. William Hurt and Charlotte Gainsbourg have a fragile, yet electric chemistry that is incredibly compelling.

With this pairing, the difference in age is also quite apparent. Jane's severity in style and dress only seems to underscore the fact that she is a young woman and Rochester is a mature man. Moreover, the issue of social class is somewhat glossed over, although Jane Eyre's relationship with her aristocratic employer would have broken all the roles of the Victorian social hierarchy. The film strives to capture the feeling and content of the novel, the Gothic elements, the connection between the protagonists, and the viewpoint of the story from Jane's perspective. The film is moody and bleak, the correct atmosphere to highlight the gothic undertones, as well as the repressed, implied sexuality of the source material. Everything at Thornfield is gloomy and damp. Yet Jane's bedroom is filled with sunshine and beams of light, expertly contrasted with the darkened spaces that Rochester occupies. These details brilliantly and beautifully underscore the drama unfolding on screen.

Franco Zeffirelli's sombre movie expertly captures the gloom of Jane's lonely childhood and troublesome experience at Thornfield Hall. Anna Paquin's (Alias Grace) young Jane Eyre immediately steals the show. She is quietly defiant when told she is to be relocated to Lowood School. For such a small child, she possesses the courage of conviction that defines Jane Eyre as a character. This adaptation modifies the scene from the novel in which Jane inadvertently drops her slate. In the film, Jane's sickly friend Helen has her hair cut when the school supervisor, Mr. Brocklehurst, discovers her without her cap. In an act of solidarity, Jane comes forward and demands that her long locks be cut too. Although this moment is not directly taken from the book, its inclusion is a strong introduction to the eponymous heroine. Allesio Vlad's and Claudio Capponi's symphonic score

lends an operatic element to the period drama. Charlotte Gainsbourg's grown up Jane and William Hurt's Mr. Rochester are tender lovers that yearn for each other in wounded silence. Hurt embodies Rochester's less-than-handsome physicality and his "strong features, firm, grim mouth." His version of Rochester is subdued and less prone to verbal tirades and sharp quips than his character in the book, and his coolness of character matches Jane's severity. His melancholic thoughtfulness takes the place of fiery passion.

The most glaring difference between Zeffirelli's adaptation and the novel is the minimization of Jane's flight from Thornfield Hall. In the novel, Jane is forced to sleep outdoors and beg for food while attempting to escape the temptation to live as Mr. Rochester's mistress. In the film, Jane only endures a long coach ride back to Gateshead where she becomes acquainted with St. John Rivers. The development of this relationship is brief and unremarkable. Jane's wild foray in the moors is an iconic display of Jane's anguish as she departs from her one true love. Without it, the film suffers a loss of key character exposition. Despite the abbreviated nature of the film, this *Jane Eyre* version is deeply romantic and perhaps overlooked largely because of its solemnity. While some literary elements are lost to Hollywood, Gainsbourg and Hurt make up for this shortcoming by imbuing a strong sense of intimacy between their characters. Jane's return to Thornfield incites Mr. Rochester to stand from his solitary chair, precariously with his cane. Their coming together again at the end of the film is a sweet reconciliation between the screen and the page.

***Jane Eyre,* 1997**

Adapted for television by Robert Young, starring Samantha Morton and Ciaran Hinds, *Jane Eyre* (1997) condenses a masterpiece of the English language into 108 minutes. Relationships that have many hundreds of pages to build up can end up feeling rushed and curt in the visual representation. Ciaran Hinds' take on Rochester certainly stands out among the others. Hinds often chooses to play Rochester as aggressive and abrasive, raising his voice frequently to convey Rochester's passionate nature. Both Jane and Rochester certainly fit their physical descriptions in the book, both in terms of age and physical features. It takes time to appreciate Robert Young's Jane Eyre. Integral narrative elements have been excluded from the movie, leaving the actors without valuable and formative moments to sufficiently develop their characters. With her tranquil demeanour and inherent repose, Samantha Morton is a lovely Jane Eyre. She is mirthful, her eyes sparkling with pleasure in Mr. Rochester's presence. All major plot points, except Jane's trip to Gateshead to visit her dying aunt are included in *Jane Eyre*, 1997. In the book, after a childhood of mockery and fear, adult Jane forgives her dying aunt. But her trip to Gateshead to visit her aunt does not feature in the film. Though the audience detects Jane's kindness in Morton's interpretation, we do not witness the fullness of Jane's fortitude, and miss her generous spirit. According to Ellis and Kaplan, "thus, by 1997 in the wake of the feminist cultural intervention, it was possible for BBC and A & E to construct a Jane Eyre version less about patriarchal domination" (204). The film does not over dramatise the main character nor the main actions.

Ciaran Hinds' brusque, and at times positively cruel, Mr. Rochester is Jane's absolute antithesis. The film's interpretation of Brontë's hero is unsettling. Mr. Rochester is known to be moody, but in this version, he is belligerent with Jane. He yells that he knew she would leave him and that she should "try to be more original" when she departs upon learning of his wife, Bertha (Fig.16). He then grabs her tightly about the arms as she avoids his eye. His attempt to force her into his arms is an uncomfortable departure from Jane's acquiescence in the novel. Even she seems repulsed by him at this moment.

(Fig.16) (Jane and Rochester's parting scene in *Jane Eyre*, 1997)

Although this version has its shortcomings, it is worth watching more than once to make a full-fledged assessment. Hinds provokes the question of whether this hero is truly likeable. And while certainly an attractive man, Hinds is not a conventionally beautiful man. He arguably fits more readily with Brontë's description of Rochester' physical appearance and looks than many others who have played Rochester on screen.

***Jane Eyre,* 2006**

Jane Eyre 2006, starring Ruth Wilson and Toby Stephens is another version that aired as a television series on BBC. Directed by Susanna White and scripted by Sandy Welch, these four episodes mini-series, cover everything in the novel, from Gateshead to Moor House. Scenes with Jane and Rochester pulse with romance and mystery, and the chemistry between Ruth Wilson and Toby Stephens is undeniable. As with more recent film and TV versions of *Jane Eyre*, the adaptation provides rational explanations for the mystical elements. It also updates the dialogue for a more contemporary feel and focuses on capturing the emotional core of the novel.

Patsy Stoneman argues, "the term 'BBC' acts as a guarantee or hallmark of quality and sympathy towards 'the Classics' which, in turn, leads to expectations of 'fidelity' in the screenwriter's treatment of the nation's 'favourite stories'. As Stoneman concludes, 'where the adaptation is of a nineteenth-century "classic" realist novel [. . .] and the production context is the BBC, with its known responsibility to the national literary heritage, adapters tend to take few obvious "liberties" with their originating text" (85)

Certain changes are made to the dialogue to modernise the story for newer audiences. However, between Ruth Wilson's wonderful performance and the strength of the central love story, this version certainly does justice to Brontë's story. The 2006 version also includes the seldom-depicted plot point involving Miss Oliver Rosamund. Several scenes from the novel are moved to different times of the narrative. The events surrounding Jane's flight from Thornfield are revealed as flashback sequences. Susanna White's four-part BBC serial adaptation proves that

stories can truly flourish when they are told at the intended pace. Much of the screenplay and the character- building are adapted directly from the novel. With abundant time to develop the plot, the two lead actors are given form to fleshed-out versions of their characters. Toby Stephens' Rochester is the kind of capricious Byronic hero that Brontë intended. He demonstrates Mr. Rochester's complexity and diverse character and is not merely a stout and steady shape of a man with whom Jane Eyre is meant to fall in love.

Ruth Wilson's Jane is observant and capable of biting wit. She incites Mr. Rochester's jealousy for her own amusement when recounting her time with St. John Rivers. The BBC mini-series brings the author's characters to life; Ruth Wilson and Toby Stephens thrive in the extended television series and as a result they perfectly embody Brontë's nuanced lovers.

(Final scene of *Jane Eyre*, 2006 BBC mini-series)

The adaptation is also significant in the respect that it is the only one till date conceived by a woman director and writer, and this serves as the primary reason for the serial's ideological position, brought about by the tireless efforts of their feminist- professional predecessors. While considering the refashioning of Brontë's heroine in the film's promotional material, Sarah Fannings observes that the creators have sexually liberated Jane in this post-feminist refashioning.

Director Susanna White and screenwriter Sandy Welch seem to be much more attuned both to the feelings of women and the pulse of of Western culture at the start of the twenty-first century. In the 2006 adaptation, we have a Jane who is not only allowed to be strong-minded but one who also gains a significant amount of power. White and Welch have also shaped Rochester into a female-friendly version of his literary and filmic ancestors; Toby Stephens never shouts or snaps his fingers. Throughout the serial, Jane and Rochester's affinity is often registered through suggestions of their intellectual equality. (50)

However, the adaptation has not satisfied all critics alike. Despite the modernisation of the novel's dialogues, the play with its narrative style, and the stellar performance of the cast, *Jane Eyre 2006* mini-series is not without problems. As Rebecca White points out, "Welch's series struggles with the complexities and paradoxes that are inherent to any screen adaptation of a literary text written in the first person" (137). Welch's presentation of Jane, like all its predecessors, loses the nuances of characterization embodied in Brontë's narrative form. The interiority of Jane's voice becomes impossible to be precisely transferred onto screen. It is the connection between Jane's voice and her mind, and the awareness of her physical

being, which leads to a rich presentation of selfhood in the novel, which is hard to capture on screen.

***Jane Eyre*, 2011**

The most recent adaptation of *Jane Eyre* was released in 2011. In a bold new feature version of *Jane Eyre*, director Cary Joji Fukunaga and screenwriter Moira Buffini infuse a contemporary immediacy into Charlotte Brontë's timeless, classic story. Mia Wasikowska and Michael Fassbender star in the iconic lead roles of the romantic drama, the heroine of which continues to inspire new generations of devoted readers and viewers. The characters and some of the situations are adjusted to fit a modern audience. The film however is overly romanticised, and de-politicized. Jane's reflections on life, love, class, gender and so on, are less developed and the film is more of a love story than a story about a young woman's life in the Victorian era. Though it might sound sacrilegious to reject the romantic elements in the novel, a story centred on the obsessive love between a teenage governess and her master, readers have always picked up the rising tension between the subtexts of the novel and the text's uneasy relationship with love.

As per director Cary Fukunaga and screenwriter Moira Buffini's design, the movie begins with Jane leaving Thornfield. The rest of the story, including Jane's childhood, her romance with Rochester, her attempted marriage, her time with the Rivers at the Moors, and the final return to Thornfield, to her blind master, is told through flashbacks. This improves the pacing of the film and keeps the audience engaged.

Though many actors have put their own spin on these characters, this cast is quite unmatched. Michael Fassbender is a nearly perfect Rochester. Mia Wasikowska is the star, and perhaps the greatest strength of this adaptation is the way it is so clearly meant to be Jane's story. Wasikowska captures the nuances and contradictions of the iconic character. Fukunaga's 2011 film adaptation is undoubtedly exuberant to behold, but as in the case of every other feature film, the compacted plot sacrificed depth in the portrayal of lead characters.

The cross paths in the dark stone-walled corridors and low-lit rooms of Thornfield Hall serve to resonate the gothic ambience of Brontë's tale. The atmosphere of Thornfield and the Moors, along with the exterior shots of the storm-grey heather upon the rising moors, practically pull viewers into the blistering cold of northern England. This is one of the few adaptations which have included the miseries Jane had to endure wandering in the moors prior to becoming acquainted with her cousins.

(Jane flees Thornfield in the opening scene of *Jane Eyre*, 2011)

Though he appears brusque, Mr. Rochester shares sensitivity with Jane that ultimately turns her heart towards him. Fassbender commits to Mr. Rochester's choleric temperament. Brontë's Jane is not as plain or as obscure as others may assume. In the novel, there is a fire and intelligence in her that is evidenced by her ability to hold her own while jesting with Mr. Rochester. Unfortunately, Jane and her quick wit do not translate as well on screen. The audiences do not see two intellectual equals grow closer through a mutual sense of humour. On the contrary, a rather cold man suddenly declares love for an inscrutable woman. The course of Jane's and Mr. Rochester's relationship comes to an abrupt climax because the audience is deprived of the fully imagined romance that Charlotte Brontë created for her readers. Despite these flaws, the gothic pastiche, and the stunning visuals go a long way to help make this a compelling and satisfying adaptation of the 1847 classic.

(Bertha Mason and Edward Rochester in *Jane Eyre*, 2011)

In their attempts to update the narrative, films and television adaptations either accentuate or suppress different elements of Brontë's principal narrative. Zeffirelli's film (1996), for instance, recasts Rochester as "harmless and mild-mannered". Robert Young's film (1997) "overemphasises his temperamental personality" while White's television mini-series (2006) tries to establish a balance between Rochester's "sensitive and aggressive sides" (Mann, 161) Modern adaptations also reinvent Rochester's treatment and relationship with Bertha a way to alleviate the concern for the mentally unstable and with the intention to re-emphasize Rochester's position as a romantic hero.

At the heart of Charlotte Brontë's most celebrated work is the complex romance between Jane and Mr. Rochester that transcends time. In this multifaceted bildungsroman, Jane goes on a journey of personal discovery and overcomes adversity to find happiness and self-respect. Undoubtedly, the novel has inspired countless authors and filmmakers, a testament to Brontë's storytelling that few have tampered with the original characters, plot, and setting. Each adaptation brings to light different aspects of *Jane Eyre,* but the unconventional love story remains paramount for many viewers. *Jane Eyre* presents love as a superior force wielded by two human beings with compatible and inseparable spirits. Whichever version viewers choose to watch, Brontë's classic is an integral piece of our cultural landscape that should continue to be enjoyed and adapted.

Since adaptations cannot possibly be a substitute for the text, all we can hope is that the former will guide millions to the real" Jane Eyre" in the book. It is only in the book that Jane comes to her full moral stature, and there alone can we share to

the full her determination and fortitude, the inward dilemmas and conflicts of her character and concealed intensity of life. Ultimately what we ask of adaptation is that it summons audiences to look beyond the text, at the different worlds lodged within the texts, to uncover the hidden, and analyse various other crystallizations. Multicultural afterlives and adaptations present opportunities to conjoin the past and the present, drawing Brontë studies into current discussions on race, racism, gender, and ethnicity. Every reading of a text is an interpretation, a translation. Adaptation opens the way for further adaptation. Some members of the audience try their own transformations thus making the worlds within literary texts richer.

Film audiences have become increasingly sophisticated in turns of their demand and expectations with the passing years leading to a greater positive relationship between literature and film, and creation of more faithful adaptations over the years. Films blend images and worlds into a delightful new system of narration that becomes cherished by its consumers. Adaptations also combine the worlds of literature and films and offer scope for greater critical appreciation of the source text. Faithful film adaptations of successful novels and plays are likely to sit well with the audience as they provide a welcome change from formulaic movies and hackneyed plots. A good adaptation is not merely one that is completely faithful or loyal to a given text, rather one that remains faithful to the spirit of the work. It is a fruitful balance of the theme and aesthetics of the original work and the demands of the celluloid medium. Writers and filmmakers must strive to achieve this balance for the adaptation to stay and captivate viewers for years to come. The capacity of a

filmmaker to maintain this fine balance along with his integrity as a translator would be judged by changing time frames and spatial dimensions.

Adaptations of classic texts, in other words, have carved a permanent niche in the hearts of viewers as well as in the motion picture industry, that these two art forms have become inextricably bound together.

CHAPTER V

Parody, Pastiche and Pop: *Jane Eyre*'s Enduring Appeal in Contemporary Culture

In contemporary times, the popularity of a book is defined not only by its sales and critical reception but also by the creation of other art forms and various merchandising based on the book. While operas, radio adaptations and theatrical performances were the markers for determining the popularity of a book in the olden times, recent markers include movie adaptations, web series, cartoons, internet games, and other forms of merchandise such as fan T shirts, mugs, hats, porcelain figurines, stamps, souvenirs, and the like. Contemporary popular fiction is a product of the entertainment industry that markets and sells popular narratives for films, television, internet, radio, and periodicals.

Popular fiction serves primarily as an indicator of the social and psychological characteristics of the multitude. An analysis of the same would enable us to decode the typical forms of behaviour, commonly held beliefs, prejudices, attitudes, and aspirations of a large population though popular literary products can make no claim to truth and insight. Though they continue to be an influential tool in society, their symbols or values cannot be overestimated as authentic diagnostic tools for studying human behaviour in contemporary society.

Jane Eyre continues to be one of the most popular English novels of all times ever since its publication in 1847. It has fascinated scholars as well as a wide reading public alike and over the years has proved to be a rich source of inspiration

for many successive generations of creative writers and artists. Re-worked in so many adaptations for stage and screen, inspiring numerous painters, and musicians, frequently imitated, parodied, retold, or extended by prequels and sequels, the novel never goes out of fashion with new versions drawing upon earlier versions thus creating a dense intertextual web in the Brontë scholarship.

For the public outside academic scholarship, there are a handful of websites dedicated to historical and biographical information about the Brontës, Victorian life and times, and reactions to *Jane Eyre* as novel, film adaptation, and stage adaptations. In other words, it is a product of high culture as well as popular culture, respectively the culture of the elite and the masses. High culture and pop culture are two subsets of culture with their unique values, attitudes, beliefs, norms, histories, and taboos. Specific consumption patterns, lifestyle, literature, beliefs, and attitudes set the elites apart from the mass society. Pop culture is less sophisticated and more appealing to the public. While operas, renaissance art, expensive restaurants, high end leisure clubs, and classical music are examples of high culture, television shows, fast food, best seller books, new genres of music and fashion are a few examples of cultures shared by the masses. With its remarkable scholarship along with its perennial reproduction in mass media and the best-seller fiction, *Jane Eyre* occupies the peculiar position of being a product of both the cultures.

In *Popular Culture: A User's Guide,* Susie O'Brien and Imre Szeman discuss the various versions of the definition of the concept of culture.

> The most familiar use of the term *popular culture* identifies it with the entertainment produced through and by commercial media

> (television, film, the music industry, etc.) that have the economic and technological capacity to reach large, demographically diverse, and geographically dispersed audiences. Popularity is measured, in this case, by patterns of consumption: it refers to the things we buy (or watch or listen to, etc.). A somewhat different use of *popular culture* defines it in terms not of consumption but of production: popular culture is what "the people" make or do for themselves. This definition fits fairly closely with the anthropological definition of *culture* as "the practices of everyday life". (O'Brien, 7)

Popular culture in the present times is undergoing shifts and changes that reshape how consumers experience it. New technologies play a major role in this shift as people are connected to one another as never before through mobile communication devices, email, and social networking technologies resulting in new forms of popular culture coming into being every other day. As a product of pure entertainment and often escapism, traditionally, popular literature has been sneered at and derided.

Critics have come up with different versions of their working definitions of popular fiction. In *Keywords*, Raymond Williams defines popular as 'widely favoured' or 'well liked' (236) by people carrying along the connotation of inferior or low.

> Popular culture was not identified by the people but by others, and it still carries two older senses: inferior kinds of work (cf. popular literature, popular press as distinguished from quality press); and

> work deliberately setting out to win favour (popular journalism as distinguished from democratic journalism, or popular entertainment); as well as the more modern sense of well-liked by many people, with which of course, in many cases, the earlier senses overlap. (237)

He outlines that by the nineteenth century, the meaning of popular culture accommodated the earlier notion of 'belonging to the people' along with its modern meaning of 'widely favoured'. Moreover, the subsequent shortening of the word *popular* to *pop* "gave the word a lively informality but opened it, more easily, to a sense of the trivial." (238)

Christopher Pawling defines popular fiction as the significant other of contemporary fiction that encompasses a mass of narratives produced for and enjoyed by a largely uncritical mass readership. (2) In *Pulp: Reading Popular Fiction*, Scott McCracken defines popular fiction as fiction read by 'large numbers of people' and that which is a product of a 'huge entertainment industry' (1). He observes that popular fiction is only a small part of popular culture and can only be studied in relation with other forms of culture such as narratives for televisions, films, magazines, periodicals, and so on. He acknowledges a power balance between writers, publishers, and markets.

Popular fiction generally produces predictable texts in mostly repetitive formulas with few deviations. Readers of pop fiction, Walter Nash observes, "do not want [the same book] again, though [they] may want more [of the same kind]" (2). Pop fiction writers employ winning formulas that sell big in the shortest period of time. It is generally rooted in time, more often than a place. For this reason, fiction

that is popular at a particular period might not be popular at a different period. As Christine Berberich observes in *The Bloomsbury Introduction to Popular Fiction*, the temporality and spatiality of popular fiction make what is popular today not necessarily popular tomorrow (4). Given the pace at which the world changes, "allusions to trends and fads" that are peculiar to a particular time might not be relatable to people a decade, let alone a century later. In Clive Bloom's opinion popular fiction is fiction that "becomes its time" and is caught "in its own age" (15). The issue of longevity is the most common tool employed to criticise popular fiction, as a real 'classic' text supposedly transcends the boundaries of space and time. Despite its volatile nature, pop fiction helps to form assumptions about what a society cherished, celebrated, or felt strongly at a certain point in time.

Bestsellers are the most familiar kind of popular fiction. They are a product of both industrial and digital revolution. Earlier forms of popular culture such as folk songs, ballads, and popular theatre had a relatively direct contact with audiences. In the nineteenth century, novels became increasingly serialised and distributed from the steam press, consciously aimed at the family audience. By the end of the nineteenth century, there was a noticeable split between the elitist high culture, and mass culture. In the early twentieth century, gothic novels and romances became adapted for stage and screen followed by an obsession with detective and science fiction, that was eventually followed by vampires, zombies, and the erotic. Contemporary best-selling fiction based on nineteenth or twentieth century classics requires that these texts be remade or re-interpreted in accordance with the sensibility of the present times.

It is highly unlikely that the popular appeal of *Jane Eyre* stems from a reader's deep appreciation of the novel's complexities, rather it might have resulted from the novel's relative success in resonating with a reader's particular situations and emotions. Not only did Charlotte Brontë' create a work with a capacity to inspire, her early death at 38 due to complications in pregnancy, leaving only a few novels in her oeuvre, ensured that the demand for her works would always outweigh supply. This imbalance has been redressed by publishers and authors, generating an array of popular fiction that can now be considered a heritage of its own.

Despite the diversity, we can still identify quite a few trends in *Jane Eyre* adaptations. Majority of the texts chosen as part of the study are penned or conceived by women. Most of the adaptations consulted and those selected for the study are told from the point of view of Jane, the protagonist. The transformation generally involved a simple expansion of the narrative into a prequel or sequel, or at times a slight variation wherein the author shifted the voice of the narrator from Jane to some other character in the novel, thereby creating an alternate narrative. Characteristic of a true fan fiction narrative, the core premises of the novel remain the same for all the selected adaptations, reaffirming Walter Nash's point that pop fiction readers look forward to "more" (2) of the same kind.

As Mettinger and Rubik observe in the introduction to their comprehensive collection of essays on *Jane Eyre* reworkings, *A Breath of Fresh Eyre: Intertextual and Intermedial Reworkings of Jane Eyre*, not all aspects of the novel that have sparked critical and academic debate have generated interest in the general reading community. The romantic love story, the gothic melodrama, along with the courage

and resilience of the plain, obscure but insubordinate heroine might have guaranteed the novel its "enduring popular appeal" (10). Another factor that may have facilitated the novel's integration into popular culture might be the domestication of a non-conformist heroine. The inevitable watering down of Brontë's insubordinate heroine served as a factor for her overwhelming success in popular culture.

Through her marriage to Rochester and her embracing the identity of the second Mrs. Rochester, Jane becomes one of the "socially sanctioned female figures", as Sandra Gilbert puts it in "Jane Eyre and the Secrets of Furious Lovemaking", which the Brontë heroines struggled not to become. (352) The romantic trope, the domestication of the heroine, gothic traditions, and shared prejudices of the readers have led to the enormous success of the novel as a product of popular culture. The adaptations chosen as part of the study, other than the ones offering alternate perspectives discussed in detail in chapter II, follow the same pattern of romanticization and celebration of love and marriage, and dwell in the excesses of the gothic and horrors of inappropriate liaisons. Despite the radical changes in society, the novel seems to be still able to address the romantic ideals and psychological needs of the readers.

Jane Eyre as a passionate love story has captured the interest of its readers from the beginning. As a love story, the novel explores the rare honesty and complexities of passion and tenderness. Jane-Rochester love, in all its fluctuations, strikes the reader as real and moving. When appropriated to stage and screen, romance always occupied the centre stage. The plots combined an overwhelming romantic passion and an egalitarian marriage for the emotional gratification of both

sexes. Academics scorn at the reduction of the novel into pulp cliches and over exertion of the love myth to draw readers. As an academic and feminist, Sandra Gilbert confesses that she felt the need to repress her desire for “a romantic- and more specifically a sexual-climax” to maintain political correctness. (355) However, she does not shy away from the fact that a furious and rebellious sexual passion has been responsible for the novel’s perennial appeal.

> Though we might quite properly scorn the cliches of those who saw the novel as primarily a romance that "throbs with sensuality" and a book that "only the lonely" could have written, oughtn't we to have conceded that something about the "furious lovemaking" in the book was what made it ragingly popular in the first place? (356)

In her astute analysis of *Jane Eyre*’s popularity, Sandra Gilbert becomes convinced that an average reader would indulge in the illicit glamour of the romance and passion between the plain governess and her brooding master that ultimately ends in marriage despite all odds. She contends that Brontë created her hero and heroine in such a fashion that the charisma between them was impossible to miss. She placed Jane in dysfunctional families, and among abusive caretakers yearning for love and learning ways to obtain it.

She endows the male and female lead with considerable passion that is not always rational. The “unspeakable depth or fiery interiority” presents both Rochester and Jane with a kind of mystery that has always been charismatic to readers. (357) The uncanny clarity with which the novel transcribes the fantasies of sexes and

indulges in the mysteries of sexuality and passion makes the novel appealing to the masses across cultures.

While the distilling and reduction of *Jane Eyre* perpetuate the idiom of romantic love, it also obscures the ideological feats such as female autonomy and independence in *Jane Eyre*. In *The Brontë Myth* (2002), Lucasta Miller explains:

> Jane Eyre's status as a modern myth — its dissemination into mass culture — can be explained by its ability to be broken down into the basic building blocks of a simple Cinderella story or Bluebeard narrative. But Charlotte's real achievement in the novel was to create a different kind of myth: a positive concept of the emerging female self in a society whose predominant models of middle-class femininity were self-denying, dutiful and passion free. (14)

Sarah E. Fannings also argues that the categorisation of the novel into a simple romance would be hurtful to scholars and other Brontë enthusiasts. Fannings examines the foregrounding of romance in the visual adaptations of *Jane Eyre* in her article, "The Many Faces of Jane Eyre: Film Cultures and the Frontiers of Feminist Representation". She writes:

> To categorise *Jane Eyre* simply as romance would be an injury to the mind and work of Charlotte Brontë. Scholars, students and Brontëphiles know that behind the veil of romance lies an intelligent heroine who questions the imposed limits of her sex with an indignation that speaks volumes for the many disenfranchised women

> of her era. While the pattern of foregrounding the romance in film and television adaptations is largely a palimpsestuous product of various histories and media cultures, it is the dynamic treatment of 'the woman question' in the adaptations that forms the subject of this article.

Scholars consider the fairy tale structure of the novel responsible for its immediate as well as perennial popularity. Helen Moglen identifies in Brontë an undeniable pattern of a common fairy tale of a "dispossessed princess" (108). In such fairy tales, *Cinderella* and *Snow White* for example, the conflicts and aspirations of the adolescent heroine and the ambivalent attitude towards her family members play a prominent role. The heroines experience painful feelings of anger, rejection and hostility typically projected at a wicked stepmother and her children. In the family scenario, the father figure who would act on behalf of the daughter is unable to do so, while the mother figure is also conveniently absent, or in most cases, dead. The heroine passes through several trials and chooses from alternative possibilities to strengthen herself morally. A lover or the 'other self' is essential for the completion of her true existence. He identifies her "royalty hidden beneath the dust of poverty" (108) and through marriage bestows upon her family, wealth, and status. The domestic life of the heroine transforms with the arrival of the hero who brings along the glamour of the world outside.

However, in Brontë, this union is not without problems. Rochester's marital status, along with Jane's anxieties of becoming a mistress serves as obstacles to the romantic myth. The romantic track becomes almost impossible and unattainable

creating an irreconcilable tension between the reality of separation and the dream of union, maintaining intact in the characters and in reader/ viewer the intensity of desire for their union. As Sigmund Freud concurs, desire becomes heightened by obstacles. He proposed that obstacles are inevitable for desires to heighten. The value the mind sets on erotic needs instantly sinks as soon as satisfaction becomes readily obtainable. Some obstacle is needed to swell the tide of the libido to its height. (Freud, 67)

The author-intended obstacles and the near impossible union of the star-crossed lovers in Brontë has in fact contributed to its enduring allure as a popular romance novel. The narrative also works in alignment with the tradition of western romances that delay union and possession and keeps the drain of desire and passion in check. Writing about love in the Western world, Denis de Rougemont shows that desire is at the heart of romantic love in the west whose intensity is reduced by quick possession.

> But however much I protest beforehand, no sooner do I admit that in instinct and sex there are spontaneous reactions analogous in some respects to those occurring in the passion of the Tristan myth than many people will suppose that this settles the matter so far as I am concerned. They are bound to think that the obstruction which has so often cropped up in the course of my analysis of the myth is some thing altogether natural. To delay pleasure is the most elementary of the wiles of desire; and man is 'so made' as sometimes to subject

> himself to a semi- instinctive continence for the benefit of the species. (59)

Hence narratives that experiment with the absence of lovers rather than their immediate presence embody greater passion and intensity of desire leading to greater satisfaction quotient in the reader/viewer. This is yet another strategy common to all *Jane Eyre* adaptations. As Barbara Schaff observes, *Jane Eyre* is read by many for the simple reason that its romance plot offers pleasure to its readers. It is therefore undeniable that the conformity of the novel to popular romantic myths is the chief reason for the novel's vast afterlife on screen and other media.

Jasper Fforde's *The Eyre Affair* (2001) follows the pop fiction conventions while presenting the reader with an aura of novelty. It is composed as a detective fiction but is less formulaic in nature and explores the contemporary opportunity to produce detectives with newer identities such as the feminist, the gay, and the black unlike the existing detective models like Sherlock Holmes, Lord Peter Wimsley or Hercule Poirot. Thursday Next, the protagonist is a female detective, with a great track record. It is a blend of detective, fantasy and sci-fi genres that is set in an alternative time in literature-obsessed England where time travelling, reality bending, entering as well as altering narrative worlds, along with literary crimes are commonplace things. Literary criminal Acheron Hades' abduction of Jane Eyre also stemmed from the novel's enormous popularity. This adaptation deviates from the general trends of *Jane Eyre* adaptations in various manners. It is penned by a male author and plays differently with the romance trope. Freud's theory on obstacles to love can be applied to Thursday's love life as she is distant from her former

boyfriend Landen owing to misunderstandings. Sexual tension is evident in their chance encounters along with jealousy for their present partners. The lovers finally reconcile and eventually tie the knot. Barbara Schaff observes that Fforde satirically foregrounds the romance plot as an important ideological and structural element of his novel. (30) Fforde's alternative history has a subversion of gender roles with the detective Thursday solving her case as well as setting her own love story right. The marital bliss as well as romantic fulfilment reinforces the cultural significance of the ideal of romantic love while also exposing it as an ideological construct (31).

Fforde's transformation of the text makes it more a spin off rather than an adaptation where the narrative does not closely follow the premise of the hypertext. Rather, it presents the events of the text in such a fashion that Brontë's novel happens to be far different from the versions fans had read before 1985. It is Next's intervention that altered the climax of the novel. The presence of vampires and zombies, along with a Special Operations Wing in the police to track them down makes them a recent pop fiction phenomenon. An experimental blend of genres, *The Eyre Affair* is the initial entry in the phenomenally successful and best-selling 'Thursday Next' series of Jasper Fforde.

Crime fiction is a tremendously successful genre of pop fiction owing to readers' fascination with rule breakers and non-conformists. Ian Rankin, in his foreword to *Crime Fiction: A Reader's Guide*, edited by Barry Forshaw, regards crime fiction as the "perfect vehicle for the discussion of contemporary social issues" (i) Rule breakers evoke curiosity in the readers as those rules underpin the notion of civilization. Crime fiction, as a popular genre entertains readers worldwide

and deals with universal questions about "life and death, crime and punishment, conflicting values and moral systems" (Nilson, 4) Reader's obsession with the dark, underworld, crime and just retribution is evident in the enormous popularity of characters like Batman, Joker, stock characters like the Ripper, the serial killer, the psycho and so on in pop fiction. Lyndsay Faye's transformation of *Jane Eyre* into a crime novel, *Jane Steele* (2016), sits well with pop conventions. The premise of the original story is retained, save a few deviations from it. The transformation is rather simple with Jane Steele replacing Jane Eyre in the latter's narrative. Jane Steele, the protagonist lives in circumstances like Jane Eyre but evolves into a serial killer, following the tradition of Patricia Cornwell's infamous serial killer of the Whitechapel district of London, Jack the Ripper. Gruesome murders and crime have a long history of entertaining readers and movie goers. It is a significant participant in the sphere of popular literature, a multimillion industry whose stories circulate in multimedia landscapes such as books, television serials and movies. Jane Steele routinely wields the knife as her resistance to sexual abuse, tyranny, violence, exploitation, and self-defence. Despite being a serial killer, Faye's protagonist is far from being hated as her crimes could be read as retributions to injustice. She was unlike other serial killers in pop cultures who are innately psychopaths and kill without any justifiable motives. Jane and Charles' love story always attracts much attention in Faye's narrative wherein Jane comes clean about her crimes and Charles accepts her without judgement. *Jane Steele*'s transformation of Jane into a rule breaker, unwilling to suffer fools, tyrants, or fate, with its romance, thrill, and satire is an appropriation of contemporary sensibilities that is responsible for the huge success of this gutsy, serial killer in popular fiction.

Offering opportunities of exploration of places, people, and entities unknown, science fiction is a successful genre of popular literature. The incredible success of sci-fi film series like *The Matrix* (1999-2021), *The Terminator* (1984-2019), *X-Men* (2000- 2020), a handful of movies on futuristic space explorations such as Ridley Scott's *The Martian* (2015), George Clooney's *The Midnight Sky* (2020), James Gray's *Ad Astra* (2019), AI based movies like Ben Young's *Extinction* (2018), Gavin Rothery's *Archive* (2020), Grant Sputores' *I Am Mother* (2019), alien encounter movies like James Cameron's *Avatar* (2009) and *Avatar: The Way of Water* (2022), Dennis Villeneuve's *Arrival* (2016), Ridley Scott's *Prometheus* (2012), the movies in the *Aliens* (1979-2017) franchise directed by James Cameron, Ridley Scott, David Fincher and Jean Pierre Jeunet and so on show how significant a contributor sci-fi narratives are to contemporary pop culture. Science fiction is one of the most innovative of popular forms. They represent alternative worlds in comparison with the society as it is now. Whether in the form of paperbacks or films, science fiction narratives present visions of the future, and give "structure to new identities created in process with the inhuman, alien world of machines" (McCracken, 124). *Jenna Starborn* (2002) reimagines *Jane Eyre* in unknown planets, encountering futuristic technology, with the protagonist Jenna not being born but created from a frozen embryonic tissue. Jenna has a talent in science and carries out intergalactic journeys in pursuit of an education, an occupation and love. Sharon Shinn maintains much of Jane Eyre's original premises such as the class defined social structure, Jane's dependent status, the isolated manor, and the major events like her training in the charity school, vocation at Thornfield residence, romance with her employer, failed marriage, fleeing, and eventual return. The novel

presents an increasingly complex relationship between humanity and technology and blurs the borderline between them to make the representation appear natural and normal.

Despite its bad reputation of being scandalous and essentially pulp, erotic literature has a wide readership. With the advent of digital books, more people became drawn to the genre as technology enabled them to browse, borrow, buy or read erotica without their privacy at stake. Pornography and erotica are a ubiquitous and widely used form of sexual entertainment. Today, explicit representation of female sexuality by female filmmakers is also not uncommon. In an interview with Dennis West, Marielle Nitoslawska, creator of the highly controversial women-friendly pornographic series, *Bad Girls* (2001), which confronts and alters the expectations of a male dominated industry, talks about a "forbidden fruit syndrome" necessitated by the Judeo-Christian traditions of the Western world which treats sex for pleasure as a scandal and sin.

> Taboo sells and it is in the interest of the porn industry to perpetuate such taboos. The Western World's Judeo-Christian heritage has marginalised and suppressed sexuality for both genders, but for women in particular. The resulting virgin/ whore paradigm has taught us that sex, and pleasure in it, is bad, unless it is undertaken in the pursuit of procreation (West, 13)

Fanfiction erotica is a cult in itself. From steamy Regency era romances to the contemporary sexy romps, erotica presents itself in many forms. Clandestine classics is a prominent form of fanfiction erotica in which authors reinvent sexual

tension of the characters of high culture/ classic literature and offer them an outlet. Ben Dew observes that the tagline 'the classic revealed', hints at the amount of flesh revealed alongside a decidedly erotic core waiting to be unravelled beneath the prudish exteriors of major literary texts. (290). Karena Rose's *Jane Eyrotica* (2012), Eve Sinclair's *Jane Eyre Laid Bare* (2012) , and Marian Tee's *Mr. Rochester: British Bad Boy* (2017) feature Jane Eyre with steamy sexual scenes and with less restraint. They follow the original story line closely with slight deviations. While the first two novels follow the master-governess storyline, the third one is more contemporary to present a boss-secretary romance pattern. The interest of the novels in the relationship between the characters and societal attitude offers new approaches. An erotic rendition would require Jane and Rochester counterparts to engage in a series of pre-marital sexual dalliances, maintaining the horror of scandal and bigamy. Using the mash up technique and the standard language and tropes of erotic fiction, Sinclair Tee, and Rose alter the nature of the relationship between the novel's protagonists. Despite the endless shaming, judging, and deriding, the endless possibilities of fanfiction erotica is a reality. Either talked of in tones of horror, disgust, or mockery, they are a haven for many whose sexual desires are invisible to mainstream media, including women, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, people of colour and so on. Fanfiction erotica is beyond doubt a pop culture genre enjoyed by many despite being constantly taught to abstain from it.

Frequently represented in popular culture, vampires make their appearance in ballet, opera, theatre, literature, music, films, television, web series and video games. Structuring the narrative of a classic alongside a vampire premise is yet another pop

culture invention. Sharonn Shinn reimagines Jane Eyre as a slayer of vampires in *Jane Slayre* (2010). The phenomenally successful vampire genre continues to see reboots, and sequels created almost every day. Vampire is one of the most popular genres of fiction which is likely to continue ruling pop culture for years to come. The themes of death, reincarnation, forbidden sexuality, and fascination with the dark, dangerous and the mysterious make vampires so compelling to masses, adolescents, and youngsters. They serve as symbols of rebellion against nature or as alternatives to conformity. They embody suppressed sexual urges, of lust and desire and can adapt to any cultural belief. Deleuze and Guattari claim that vampires and werewolves proliferate at times of war, famine and epidemic (243), as they also represent fear, and anxieties of a society about "security, self-assurance, and national identity" (Campbell,269). Shinn's Jane is a slayer of vampires rather than a vampire romancer. She ultimately slays the werewolf at Thornfield and rescues Rochester from werewolf poisoning. Vampire phenomena in pop culture is a result of convergence of demographic and industrial trends. It is a pretty effective encapsulation of free will and nonconformity. Vampire fiction is so popular as it embodies the fears and desires of the masses.

While texts from children's literature have migrated into film, television, fan fiction, and computer games, which is complete with its own large-scale merchandising such as theme parks and film-studio tours, *Jane Eyre*'s extended engagement with children's literature is very significant. With its diverse sub-genres such as the bildungsroman, the public school, the adventure, the realistic, the fantasy and so on, children's literature is indebted to fables, ballads, fairy tales, myths, and

legends. Judith Sloman reads Jane Eyre's effectiveness as a character because of the mixture of a child's emotions and feelings with the adult character's ability to express it. Jane Eyre as Young Adult (YA) fiction is also popular as it is a coming-of-age story of a young girl who tries to find her identity in the face of many adversities. Kay Woodward's *Jane Airhead* (2009), and April Lindner's *Jane* (2010) are great examples of the novel's continuing influence in popular YA literature. In popular YA author Lena Coakley's opinion, the best time to re- read Jane Eyre is during teens as it would be the time when "first sparks of love, first kisses, and first disappointments"' (Coakley) could be read with great intensity. Woodward's Jane, a die-hard Jane Eyre fan, is barely a teenager bent on finding a love match for her divorced mother and obsessed with the trials and tribulations of her mother's love life. She longs to find the perfect Mr. Rochester for her mother. Lindner's Jane is a young college dropout and her employer, a popular rock musician. What appeals the most to the YA audience is that Jane herself is a young adult and her first steps into the wider world resonate with young readers.

Like the revisionist rewritings of *Jane Eyre*, its film adaptations also anchor themselves in the archetypal patterns of popular romance. Film versions, in particular, work on the fundamental Jane-Rochester romance. Pop culture film adaptations of *Jane Eyre* generally uphold romance as its dominant mode, side-lining female independence or critiquing patriarchy. They tend to overwrite aspects of Jane's assertiveness and independence and portray her as the pious, submissive, and desirable Victorian woman. An analysis of the standardised iconography of Jane Eyre on book covers, illustrations, film posters and so on prove that the image of the

angelic and submissive heroine sells better than the rebellious and angry. The romance plot also provides the viewers with the reassurance that marriage guarantees love, and security. It also reaffirms the domestic ideology that paradoxically sews submissiveness and satisfaction together to keep destructive forces like rebelliousness at bay.

Numerous film and television adaptations of *Jane Eyre* have appeared since the silent movie era. Patsy Stoneman suggests that more than four adaptations came up in the same era alone (87). While mini-series are more faithful adaptations of the novel such as the BBC series of 1983 and 2006, *Jane Eyre* film makers chose to condense or exclude elements of Jane's story. Like most adaptations of classic novels, *Jane Eyre* adaptations privilege the love story and fails to address the bildungsroman aspect of the novel with Jane's life. While condensing Brontë's novel to a two-hour run-time feature film is a challenging task in itself, filmmakers tend to follow a similar pattern of reduction or deletions in an urgency to develop the romantic trope. Most feature films truncate the episode of the Rivers or delete it entirely. Similar is the plight of Jane's dependent existence at Gateshead or her formative years at Lowood. As Carole M. Dope observes Jane's development into a woman through her harsh years at Lowood, her companionship with Helen Burns, the lessons she learns from her teacher and mentor, Ms. Temple and so on are crucial for the development of Jane's character. The episode of Jane visiting her dying aunt and their final reconciliation is often excluded. Gateshead and Lowood are reduced to short glimpses of Jane's sufferings and her generalised childhood

anguish. Though the love plot is undeniably central to the novel, it is only a part of Jane's character evolution.

Christy Cabanne's *Jane Eyre* (1934) starring Virginia Bruce and Colin Clive, reduces Gateshead and Lowood to considerably short sequences, rushes Jane to Thornfield, makes her meet Rochester with acute immediacy, develops their romance, separation, and eventual reunion. Jane remains impoverished and emotionally dependent on Rochester since their first encounter. Robert Stevenson's version (1944) starring Joan Fontaine and Orson Welles omits the rivers episode entirely. Franklin Shaffner's 1949 television adaptation starring Mary Sinclair and Charles Heston falls short on multiple aspects owing to its sheer 60 minutes runtime restricting even the development of the romance plot. The events of Lamont Johnson's 1957 version featuring Joan Elan and Patrick Macnee take place in Thornfield alone and is a rather bizarre adaptation of the novel altering all the events of the original plot, including the nature of Rochester and Jane's romantic love. Delbert Mann's drama of 1970 starring Susannah York and George C. Scott skips Gateshead but illustrates Jane's misery at Lowood involving the hair cutting scene, frozen wash stands, and punishments and proceeds to the romance trope. Rivers' episode also is attended but the film reinforces Rochester's masculinity and agency and subdues Jane. Charlotte Gainsbourg's self-composed expression and performance as Jane in Zeffirelli's 1996 film conveys a similar image of female submission, one in which Jane is represented as angelic or saint-like, emanating unselfish love and self-effacement. Mia Wasikowska's Jane also presents the image of female submission and saint-like purity in the 2011 version.

> The varying portrayals of Jane's story show the strength of Brontë's story along with its adaptability and ability to engage audiences in various ways, across media, time, and cultures. The appeal of this story can be explained by its inclusion of the aspects of intersectionality allowing the themes to be explored in different ways by different people in different times and perpetuating the narrative for over a century and a half.

Though *Jane Eyre* as a novel addresses the social concerns and realities of the time in which it was composed, it also reaches beyond the limitations of history, space, and time to spawn multifarious literary and media transformation. The intertextual reworkings, mashups, spin-offs, and adaptations wield the proto text inorder to weave narratives of varying hues and patterns. This in turn adds to the cultural capital of *Jane Eyre* and continues to enhance its prominence in popular consciousness. For good reasons, the novel sits equally well rooted in literary canon as well as popular culture. In an increasingly digital and multi-media driven century, *Jane Eyre* would continue to offer new opportunities and challenges to many authors that would further reshape our reading experience and attitude towards classic literature and popular culture.

CHAPTER VI

Conclusion

> *Jane Eyre is a book of books, a nest of narratives: we look over Charlotte Brontë's characters' shoulders as they read and interpret books and hear them tell one another stories. (Davies, xx)*

Multifarious interpretative approaches of *Jane Eyre* in academic discourses have helped the novel secure the position of a model text for the Victorian concerns on gender, class and race. *Jane Eyre* is a common property within culture which enjoys the status of a high culture novel as well as a pop culture text. Over the years it has pervaded every form of artistic expression in various cultures that include hundreds of adaptations into different genres in literature as well as into performing arts and particularly, cinema. The plethora of literary adaptations include prequels, sequels, retellings, spin offs and the like into all major text genres including graphic, sci-fi, erotica, detective, along with its ongoing translations into stage and screen in the form of operas, plays, and radio dramatisations. Adaptations have influenced the source novel in more ways than one, like how the source has inspired the latter. Films have helped to boost the commercial popularity of the novel and its various literary adaptations, ensuring that the text never goes out of fashion. The 19th century Brontë sisters have in fact proved to be one of literature's most fool-proof resources for adaptations into any cultural medium. *Jane Eyre*'s story is retold anew every decade.

In the process of adaptation, the source text in its entirety, or elements of it, is translated to different genres or media. This process relies heavily on intertextuality, allusions, and negotiations. The trajectory of the novel is reimagined or reinvented to create an altogether different fictional world with its own cultural codes and sensibilities. Hybridizations generally result in alternate versions of the source and exhibit conflict in relations, identities, and subjectivities. The study investigated eleven *Jane Eyre* hybrid adaptations that blended the romantic and gothic elements of Brontë' with graphic, crime, young adult fantasies, vampires, sci-fi, erotica and so on. Robab Kosravi's observation on generic categories of *Jane Eyre* and its historical significance is noteworthy.

> Ever since its publication, *Jane Eyre* has established itself as a classic of all times in its 'obvious' generic category — a novel. Clearly, part of the novel's compelling hold on its audience lies in its heavy reliance on elements of 'romance', what Northrop Frye calls 'the ultimate source and paradigm of all storytelling'. Yet *Jane Eyre*'s generic affiliations seem to go beyond the traditional boundaries as categorised in formalistic taxonomies. The dynamics of its vibrant, elastic, protean genre is in itself a story of defiance and resistance (…) It is also the socio-political implications of a generic subverting of the boundaries between the high and the low, and a structural deconstruction of the pillars of the established order that highlight the novel's historical resonance. (312)

The study analysed the ways in which genre-transformed progenies of Brontë draw similarities and differ from the source and reflect on the implications of the socio- political and cultural contexts of the times in which each adaptation was produced. Lyndsay Faye's *Jane Steele* (2016) is an adaptation significant in its carrying over of the racist prejudices so evident in Brontë, along with its middle class white woman's feminism. It placed Jane's story in the world of crime, a trope that has perennially kindled interest in readers across the globe. Jasper Fforde's *The Eyre Affair* (2001), a successful reboot of the *Jane Eyre* franchise featuring a female detective relies on postmodern narrative modes that facilitate permeability between the worlds and intertextuality becomes the central conceit in the narrative. The text does not retain or reject the racial concerns of the source text, nor are there any discussions centred on the class divisions in the novel's alternate world. The world of Fforde is positively egalitarian that nobody scorns the detective; her capabilities or incapabilities for her gender. *Jenna Starborn* (2002) by Sharon Shinn hybridises the gothic romance with science fiction to create an alternate fictional world modelled on the characteristics of a science fiction narrative. It blends romance, conflict, adventure, family tensions, and fortune in a futuristic world and discusses race, gender, and class in its constructed world of reality. Colonialism is portrayed as 'homesteading', a process in which people migrate to alien planets, take over power and subdue its uncivilised inhabitants under the guise of benevolence and the civilising mission. The sexual desires and repressions in *Jane Eyre* find an outlet in the erotic hybrids. While technology offers the creators of fanfiction erotica access and ease to create erotica in a more prolific manner in the form of novels and graphic porn, it saves the consumers from embarrassment of consumption of erotica

by ensuring their privacy. *Jane Eyre Laid Bare* (2012) by Eve Sinclair, *Jane Eyrotica* (2012) by Karena Rose and *Mr. Rochester: British Bad Boy* (2017) by Marian Tee are erotic makeovers of *Jane Eyre* that focus on the sexual tension in *Jane Eyre* indulging in lesbian passions, BDSM, orgies and other deviant sexual behaviour. Sherri Browning Erwin reimagines Jane Eyre as a vampire slayer in *Jane Slayre* (2010), a genre trending in the contemporary times because of the mass appeal and obsession with vampires, werewolves, and zombies since the immense popularity of Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight Saga* and the zombie reboot of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) by Sethe Grahame Smith, titled *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2009) which was later adapted to a feature film by the same name in 2016. Numerous other adaptations of *Jane Eyre* have appealed to children and the young adults as the source novel is brilliant in its balance of representation of the world of the adults and children with equal force, a quality most adaptations miss out. Kay Woodward's *Jane Airhead* (2009) follows a *Jane Eyre* obsessed teenager who tries to yolk reality and fiction together, a rather interesting tale for an early teen. April Lindner's *Jane* (2010) deals with Jane, a college dropout, and her emotional tenor and devotion to her employer, a love starved and tortured pop singer in his late thirties. The problems of race, gender, or class are subdued in both the adaptations primarily because they cater to the requirements of the teenage reader, and develops around the romance trope in general, between the protagonist's mother and her enigmatic lover in the former, and the nanny and her employer in the latter. Sheila Kohler's experiment on fictional autobiography, *Becoming Jane Eyre* (2009), presents the reader with the hurts, affronts, moral dilemmas, internal musings and mental turbulence of Charlotte Brontë, Jane's creator. The Japanese *Manga* is one of

the most popular forms of graphic fiction of our times. The first-person narrative and the focus on a single character has enabled *Jane Eyre*'s translation into the visual aesthetics of the graphic medium with relative ease. Crystal Chann and Sun Neko Lee's *Manga Classics: Jane Eyre* (2016) is an example of the novel's cross-cultural appeal as it has transcended not just the boundaries of language, but also found its way into its integration into the popular culture of a different culture and continent. This paves the way for possibilities for more such experiments on *Jane Eyre*'s integration and assimilation into foreign cultures.

While there is a proliferation of narratives that defied generic boundaries, *Jane Eyre* has also spawned alternative narratives that foregrounded the voices of other characters lost in its first-person narration. The second chapter dealt with such adaptations that brought to the fore the lives and experiences of other characters who were marginalised or silenced in the source text such as Bertha Mason, Grace Poole, Adele, Celine Varens, and even Edward Rochester. Eight adaptations that retold the novel through the perspectives of these characters were chosen and studied. Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) accentuates the voice of the lunatic Bertha Mason, Emma Tennant's *Adele* (2002) gives fuller life to Rochester's French ward/ illegitimate child Adele, Claire Moise's *Adele Grace and Celine: The Other Women of Jane Eyre* (2009) retells *Jane Eyre*'s story through the other significant yet side lined women characters of Brontë's narrative, and Elizabeth Newark presents a sequel to Jane and Rochester's story after their marriage through the perspective of Jane and Rochester's imagined daughter, Janet Rochester in her novel *Jane Eyre's Daughter* (2008). Novels like *Jane Eyre's Husband: The Life of Edward Rochester*

(2011) by Tara Bradley, *Rochester: A Memoir* (2017) by Cora Holmes, *Mr. Rochester* by Sarah Shoemaker (2017) and *Edward Rochester: The Master of Thornfield Hall* (2017) by R.Q. Bell present Rochester's life and his endless search for love with unflinching honesty. Drawing on intertextuality, *Wide Sargasso Sea* features the sense of entitlement of the white male in *Jane Eyre*. The text exposes the underlying sexism, side-lining and exploitation of the non-whites/creoles, and the clash between classes in *Jane Eyre*. Emma Tennant's *Adele* discusses the clash of national identities and prejudices by foregrounding Adele, the mistreated and marginalised foreign character whose identity wavers between Rochester's illegitimate daughter and his French ward. Claire Moise in *Adele Grace and Celine: The Other Women of Jane Eyre* (2009) considers the other women in *Jane Eyre* with sympathy and presents them with fuller lives. The novel follows Adele's life and how she outgrew her own tragedy of being orphaned at a tender age, alienated in a foreign land, and distrusted by her benefactor. Celine Varens is also portrayed in a favourable light as Moise dissociates her from the status of the fallen woman and a foil to Jane Eyre, in accordance with the Victorian stereotypes of the chaste English and promiscuous foreign woman. The text provides ample space and representation to Grace Poole, a prominent yet insignificant working-class woman in *Jane Eyre*, who is paid to keep her master's secret, forced to shut off from the outside world, a keeper of woman, and agent of a man, who is ironically bound to her prisoner with the same chain. Retellings by Tara Bradley, Cora Holmes, and R.Q.Bell foreground Edward Rochester's version of the story that is marked by his long suffering, lack of a loving companion, loss of sight, loss of limb, loss of power, and his increasing dependence on his young wife. However, Rochester's capitalist, patriarchal and

imperial attitude in Brontë is too strong to be concealed despite the sincere attempt of these novelists to achieve the purpose. *Jane Eyre's Daughter* (2008), abandons the gothic standard of female insanity and opted for incest instead. It is neither a transformative novel, nor does it explore any unknown shades of Brontë's original characters. How readers view any of Brontë's characters is determined by whose version of the narrative appeals to them or which version they encountered first. Intertextuality is a critical tool in such judgements, along with the deployment of gender, race, and class which facilitates varied readerly appropriations.

Jane Eyre has been adapted to visual media numerous times and in many ways. The novel's ongoing engagement with visual media has been the point of analysis in the third chapter. The novel has had a lasting impact on readers that they welcome every single reboot into the *Jane Eyre* franchise. As a result, *Jane Eyre* movies have had substantial audiences every single time it was adapted to screen and writers and movie makers seem to be drawn to the material with every passing decade. The novel has seen numerous adaptations from radio to television, stage and feature films. An analysis of the visual adaptations helps to identify discernible patterns that every filmmaker has followed. With changing times, changes in the narrative also become inevitable. Makers sway between their desire to remain faithful to the story and at the same time make the story palatable to the modern audience. Adaptations that have captured the spirit of the source text without compromising its aesthetics or distorting its plot, action, and characterizations have in fact stood the test of time, such as the radio broadcast of *Jane Eyre* (1946), preserved in archives, which was welcomed by all, well-liked and popular, and

Susanna White's BBC mini-series (2006) generally perceived as one of the most faithful adaptations of *Jane Eyre* to screen.

In Christy Cabanne's 1934 feature film, much of the earliest part of the plot is lost in translation. Added to it is the distortion of characters and the urgency to develop the romantic trope making Jane and Rochester meet immediately, not a few weeks or days after Jane's arrival at Thornfield, rather on her way to Thornfield as Adele's mistress. The quick foreshadowing of the hidden mysteries in the form of servants' whispers and warnings take away the surprise and tension centred on an otherwise slow-paced discovery. Jane is merely Rochester's love interest, whose coming of fortune is altogether avoided. The movie also opted not to compromise on Rochester's masculinity by making him blind but not mutilated. Robert Stevenson's 1944 feature film toed the line of Hollywood beauty standards to cast the charming Joan Fonatine in the place of the "poor, obscure and plain" (Brontë, 292) governess, a choice in which the plainness of the heroine failed to translate because of the actor's stunning beauty. Jane is portrayed again as submissive and lovesick and the entire movie focuses on the upheavals of Jane-Rochester love with the episodes of Jane's time at the Rivers and her coming of fortune completely left out. Rochester remains blind, yet unmutilated. Franklin Shaffner's 1949 CBC television version also omits Jane's time at Gateshead with the Reeds, her miserable boarding school days at Lowood, and her forlorn days at the Moors with her cousins, the Rivers, a rather unsuccessful attempt at translation primarily owing to the condensation of the novel and the key plot points due to time constraints. Jane receives no fortune, nor is Rochester mutilated, and the movie remains just another attempt at the celebration of

the text's romantic trope. A rather hilarious adaptation, Lamont Johnson's 1957 feature film is a perfect example of a bad adaptation, one which distorts plot and characterisation without mercy. With a mere 51 minutes running time, the text has been overly simplified, filtering out its beautiful moments and what remains is only the dregs of the novel. Jane is extremely preachy and spiritual while Rochester is repulsively amorous. Delbert Mann's 1970 version, despite skipping Gateshead and much of Lowood, still manages to capture the harsh realities of Jane's childhood. It remains faithful to the plot, and the overall tone of the novel. The movie also stands out for its attention to period details, the visuals, music, and the amazing chemistry between the lead actors, Susannah York, and George C. Scott. Julian Amyes' BBC mini-series of 1983, which came out as 11 episodes stretching to five and a half hours is a very faithful adaptation that captures all the key elements of the plot, including Jane's childhood years at Gateshead, schooling at Lowood, time as a governess at Thornfield, Rochester disguised as a gypsy fortune teller, Jane's time with the Rivers, and eventual return to Thornfield where she reunites with Rochester. The adaptation captures both the beauty of the Yorkshire landscape and intimate character interactions. The adaptation dares to accommodate things earlier versions shied away from, Jane's inheritance and Rochester's mutilation. Since the narrative shifts away from Jane's first-person point of view to multiple viewpoints, Franco Zeferelli's 1996 version destabilised the focus on Jane. It is more over a power relation between two prominent women in the narrative, Jane, and Bertha. Coupled with vibrant and scenic surroundings, the film is deeply romantic and intensifies physical and psychological suffering of the lead character. Played by actors who are not beautiful in the conventional way, Jane and Rochester of Robert

Young's 1997 television film fit their character description. With its short running time, the version falls short in developing a relationship that took hundreds of pages to build up along with the omission of integral narrative elements of the novel which deprived the actors of some formative moments in the portrayal of their characters. Jane lacks the fullness, fortune, and spirit, and Rochester is toxic and belligerent. The four- episode BBC mini-series (2006) directed by Susanna White is yet another faithful rendition of the novel, covering every episode of Jane's life from Gateshead to Ferndean. There is an undeniable chemistry between the lead actors, Ruth Wilson, and Toby Stephens, as the plot progresses through misery, romance, mystery, and pain. To connect with the modern viewers, dialogues have been slightly updated to attain a more contemporary feel. The linear progression of the text has also been positively altered which enhances the cinematic feel. The most recent adaptation of *Jane Eyre* by Cary Fukunaga starring Mia Wasikowska and Michael Fassbender was released in 2011. It is a relatively modern rendition of a period piece, which however depoliticised love, class, and gender in the source text. Not much attention is paid to Jane's self sufficiency, as she is largely portrayed as a love-sick teenage governess.

Negligence of Jane's growing up years and experiences as a dependent at Gateshead and an orphan at Lowood, which are integral to the bildungsroman of *Jane Eyre* is a pattern common to most adaptations in their immediacy to develop Jane and Rochester's romance. The over emphasis on the love trope essentially rules out Jane's self sufficiency, perseverance, and determination. To uphold Rochester's masculinity, screen writers conveniently leave out Jane inheriting a handsome amount from her dead uncle, which would relieve her from being dependent on

Rochester for financial security. Most writers also seem to have been offended by Rochester's loss of a limb which has an effect of castration on his masculinity, and hence conveniently avoided the part in most narratives. Jane, in general, is portrayed as love-sick and submissive, and seldom as Rochester's equal in intellect and wit. Popular *Jane Eyre* movies, in short, anchor themselves in romantic archetypes, sideline female independence, do not critique patriarchy, and are indifferent to the novel's concerns on race, class, and gender.

Jane Eyre has been a prominent contributor to the pop culture of every decade since its publication. The fourth chapter of the thesis studied the various engagements of the novel with contemporary popular culture. The pop culture excesses of the novel are undeniable. Merchandise around the text that includes souvenirs, fan t-shirts, mugs, porcelain figures and so on is still on the rise. In their introduction to *A Breath of Fresh Eyre*, edited volume of articles on various print and screen adaptations of *Jane Eyre*, Margaret Rubik and Elke Mettinger-Schartmann quote Patsy Stoneman's observation on the integration of the novel into pop culture:

> There seems to be no other novel which has spawned such a wealth of merchandise: *Jane Eyre* fan mugs, T-shirts, hats and a Royal Doulton porcelain figurine (a companion piece to Austen's Emma and Hardy's Tess) are offered for sale; a rose, a pellagonium and an iris bear her name; the novel was given a special stamp series by the Royal Mail celebrating Paula Rego's series of *Jane Eyre* paintings, and Charlotte Brontë (with a scene from *Jane Eyre*) was also included in the 'famous authoresses' stamp series of 1980. Oddly, in

> China there is a Jane Eyre factory producing digital albums for photo studios which advertises on the internet with a wedding photo. (KunShan Lujia Jane Eyre Album Factory)-- a somewhat unsuitable choice, one would think, considering that Jane's own wedding in white was interrupted by a charge of bigamy, but splendid proof of Umberto Eco's claim that 'in order to transform a work into a cult object one must be able to break, dislocate, unhinge it so that one can remember only parts of it irrespective of their original relationship with the whole.' (Mettinger, 10)

The novel resonates with the emotions of the common reader and the academic concerns of the scholarly reader that it has had successors that could be differentiated as products of low culture and high culture. Among the works selected for the study, novels like *Jane Steele, Jenna Starborn, Jane Airhead, Jane, The Eyre Affair, Jane Eyrotica, Jane Eyre Laid Bare, Mr. Rochester: British Bad Boy, Jane Slayre,* and *Jane Eyre's Daughter* are genuine products of popular culture, while a few novels like *Wide Sargasso Sea, Adele Grace and Celine: The Other Women in Jane Eyre,* and *Adele* have concerns above the superficial that scholars tend to be interested in.

Jane Eyre's integration into contemporary detective, crime, vampire, sci-fi and erotic pop fiction was made possible through modelling central characters and situations on *Jane Eyre*, foregrounding the original text's romance and subverting its gender roles to fit better in the world of today. A general trend in *Jane Eyre* pop fiction is that most of the adaptations are penned by women writers, which include genres like crime, erotic, and sci- fi. The protagonist is always Jane's counterpart in

a particular setting characteristic of the genre concerned. The narrative voice seldom shifts away from Jane while the core premises of the novel remain the same. The charisma between characters is generally heightened. The romance, gothic, and the domestication of the non-conformist heroine help the novel sell better.

The analysis of fiction and film adaptations of *Jane Eyre* —nineteen novels and ten films —chosen for the study as a collective, presents us with some easily discernible and interesting patterns. In the case of fiction, it is mostly women authors who have contributed to the incredible volume of *Jane Eyre* fanfiction. Out of the nineteen novels chosen for the study, eighteen are penned by women, Jasper Fforde being the only exception. This might possibly be because of the novel's continuing engagement with the various dimensions of women's everyday life; their quest for independence, recognition, and above all, happiness. Though most adaptations have been reimagined or retold through a female protagonist's point of view- generally modelled on Jane Eyre and at times on the other women in *Jane Eyre* —writers have also tried to look at *Jane Eyre*'s story through the perspective of Edward Rochester, Brontë's brooding hero. Such efforts lead to the better appreciation of the novel's familiar scenes as perceived by Rochester, resulting in a deep understanding of the motivations and forces that shaped his character and the course of his life.

On the contrary, out of the ten films chosen for the study, nine are directed by men, Susanna White's *Jane Eyre* BBC mini-series (2006) being the only visual adaptation conceived by a woman. This is not a matter of surprise as visual adaptations —feature films and television films —are affiliated to a film industry that is still male dominated despite the number of women working in the industry having reached a historic high in the last decades. However, gender inequality in

creative roles in the film industry is persistent. The fact that nine out of ten screenplays of *Jane Eyre* film adaptations have been penned by male authors, to some extent, explains the reduction of the protagonist into her master's love interest, deprivation of her financial security, and her characterisation as docile and demure.

The thesis is significant in the context of Brontë scholarship in that it blends the critical heritage of the nineteenth century with the novel trends of the twenty first century. The thesis analyses the worlds of the novel and its adaptations intermixing inherent concerns and methodology. An overview of *Jane Eyre* scholarship since 2000 reaffirms that through convergence and continued contestation, the issues of race, class, and gender in Brontë and later in the adaptations of her celebrated novel, have not lost their momentum as they gain new dimensions in every transformation.

The significance of race and imperialism in *Jane Eyre* is still significant as adaptations in one way or the other retain the text's conscious or unconscious colonial agenda and racial elements. The resurgence of interest in gender studies in relation to *Jane Eyre* has resulted in analysis on Victorian masculinities and the reappraisals of female identity and self-realisation as a prominent theme. However, with its theoretical perspectives, the thesis paid detailed attention to both the representation of women and the treatment of their identity in *Jane Eyre* in an intersectional manner while also extending analysis on their collective class interests.

With its meticulous focus on the trends of adaptations and their critical approaches, the thesis contributes to the canon of *Jane Eyre* and Brontë scholarship and illuminates current debates centred on the same. Academic investigations on

Jane Eyre are generally centred on a single adaptation, or a set of adaptations from a single medium at a particular time. This thesis, on the contrary, tried to analyse *Jane Eyre* adaptations in a more comprehensive fashion by selecting nineteen fiction adaptations of *Jane Eyre*, and ten films. With its thoroughgoing interdisciplinarity and increasing engagement with cultural studies, *Jane Eyr*e adaptations serve as an indispensable component of Brontë scholarship occupying different realms of its theoretical-historical spectrum. Each adaptation that thrived on intertextuality was situated in the social, cultural, political, and ideological contexts in which they were produced and stylistic concerns that affected both authors and readers were investigated. The thesis also tried to look beyond the general keywords of Brontë scholarship transpiring from its universal themes to resist mere identification with Brontë's world and characters and prevent the suspension of critical faculties.

Literary or visual adaptations of *Jane Eyre* cannot possibly replace the source text but can guide many readers to the original novel on which it is based. These adaptations however facilitate readers to look beyond the text, to discover the possible worlds lodged in a single text which efficiently aided in its generic transformations, to identify the inward dilemmas of characters whose voices are heard as well as stifled, and to appreciate better its translation into audio-visual medium and to form impressions on the appeal of the novel on the educated and scholarly, and the common reader.

Jane Eyre is a product of classical literature, that has reigned supreme ever since 1847, and also of popular literature, with new adaptations added to its credit every year. The fictional world of *Jane Eyre* has provided its readers with insights into the socio-cultural scenario of the times in which it was composed. It is generally

regarded as a champion text of feminism. It is one of the few books of the Victorian era that provide its female narrator with significant power. The text continues to provide material for study to every critical school such as feminism, marxism, post colonialism, and psychoanalysis. The perennial popularity of the text in academic circles can hence be attributed to its unending engagement with different theoretical schools. As a bildungsroman text, *Jane Eyre* perfectly balances the juvenile and adult life of its protagonist, hence resonating with readers across ages, and instigating many young readers to revisit the novel in their adulthood. It also continues to be a staple text for popular fiction due to its quality of being able to be reduced to simple memorable patterns. The simplest of the patterns is the love trope between the governess and her employer, that is reworked in myriad fashions in its different fanfiction adaptations. The love trope sidelines the other experiences of the protagonist such as her hardships, challenges, and growth.

In conclusion, it is with startling passion and clarity that Brontë explored her themes of the Victorian attitudes and injustices to women, a woman's struggle to establish her identity in a man's world, and the precarious lot of women forced to live a nightmarish life of poverty and suppression. *Jane Eyre* is remarkable for being a powerful, highly original account of an orphan girl's life and her development into a strong, independent woman. Brontë presents her characters with a psychological realism that was quite revolutionary for her time. She flavours her tale with honesty and candour. The central concern of the novel, finding a voice and validity for the 'ordinary' or common person, is still with us and ensures the continuing fascination that accompanies the orphan's progress and the great romantic tale of Jane and Edward's tortured paths. While some critics argue that the novel is a moralistic work

upholding romance and feminism, some others think otherwise, especially after its revisionist readings. Despite the disagreement, there is no lack of consensus on the popularity of the novel. Even today, *Jane Eyre* keeps attracting readers from all over the world, gets transformed into new genres, is retold through other voices, witnesses new film adaptations being created every decade and penetrates other genres of art like music, operas and more. It is beyond doubt that *Jane Eyre* would continue to inspire writers and directors in the years to come and would retain its superior status as a literary classic, literature adapted to screen, and as a staple source for popular fiction.

Recommendations for Further Studies

Every adaptation that is set in a similar or a different temporal, spatial, or cultural dimension of the source text, can vary in its motives and effects. Over the years, *Jane Eyre* has witnessed the proliferation of adaptations in every possible artistic medium. This thesis attempted to analyse the selected adaptations of *Jane Eyre* in relation to their source text to identify recurring trends and patterns in adaptations alongside their treatment of race, class and gender in the text. *Jane Eyre* is an inexhaustible resource that continues to offer scope for further enquiry. Not all aspects of *Jane Eyre* that have sparked academic debate have been of interest to the reading public and not all traits of the novel that the public found appealing have been scutinised by critics. There are possibilities of further research centred on the novel and its adaptations that extend beyond the immediate focus of this research. Below is a list of possible areas of research centred on *Jane Eyre* and its adaptations:

- Depiction of Bertha Mason's madness in fiction and film adaptations of *Jane Eyre*

A detailed analysis of the portrayal of madness in the adaptations can be carried out in the sample chosen for research. Most adaptations that experimented with the genre of the novel have incorporated *Jane Eyre*'s portrayal of madness. Brontë dismisses Bertha Mason's desperate attempts at gaining freedom by setting fire to Thornfield as a sign of her madness. However, only novels and films that accentuated the voice of Bertha Mason, the white creole, looked into *Jane Eyre*'s implausible connection between miscegenation and madness, which is fairly a neglected area in Jane Eyre scholarship.

❖ Nationality and character in *Jane Eyre*

Further research can be carried out on the relation between character and nationality in *Jane Eyre*, which is very prominent in the text. The text foregrounds biases and prejudices based on a character's nationality. European women, in particular such as the French Celine Varens and her daughter Adele Varens, face the heat of Rochester's prejudices throughout the novel. Similar is the state of Bertha Mason, the Jamaican white creole. Non-British people, in general, were dismissed as untrustworthy, shallow, and materialistic. The many adaptations can also be read in the same light.

❖ Strategies of imperialism and missionary endeavours in *Jane Eyre* and its adaptations

There was a big boom in missionary expeditions across Europe, America, Asia and Africa during the times *Jane Eyre* was written. The author's attitude towards colonialism is ambivalent as she seems to uphold personal liberty while not being critical of the ambitious missionary endeavours of the world's then greatest colonial empire. In fact, Jane expresses her willingness to do educational service in India. The colonial pursuits of St. John Rivers are portrayed in various shades in the few adaptations where he actually finds a place, such as Sherry Browning Erwin's *Jane Slayre* (2010) and Sharon Shinn's *Jenna Starborn* (2002). Colonialism is generally regarded as a benevolent project of Britain aimed at the welfare of its recipients. A postcolonial reading of the role of religion in carrying forward the text's innate racist attitudes can hence be carried out along with the complexities of

colonialism and intersectional engagements between colonists and the colonial subjects.

- Christian religious education as a mode of abuse and comfort in Brontë's *Jane Eyre*

In *Jane Eyre*, Brontë blends many insights on education and religion. Protestant education that Jane receives at Lowood can be considered as the dominant mode of abuse and comfort in the novel. The twisting of the Christian ideals by people around Jane like Mr. Brocklehurst and the voluntary practice of self-deprivation by the pious and passionate Helen Burns, are integral to the development of the bildungsroman of the novel. While the Reverend Brocklehurst and his followers push Jane to her edge, characters like Helen Burns and Miss Temple serve as vehicles for the comfort of the protagonist.

- The role of disease and disability in *Jane Eyre*'s narrative and adaptations

A study of the role of diseases and disabilities in *Jane Eyre*'s narrative is relevant as Charlotte Brontë's personal life was plagued by diseases that claimed the lives of her many loved ones. *Jane Eyre*'s narrative also treats disease as a recurring motif that changes her relationship with other characters in the novel and also in the formation of her 'self'. Jane is orphaned by the death of her parents, craves companionship at Lowood after the death of her best friend, questions her place at Thornfield and in Rochester's life after learning of his wife's mental illness, and eventually accepts Rochester despite his disability. However not many adaptations have paid attention to disease and death in the Lowood episodes or even Rochester's mutilation.

❖ Mysticism in *Jane Eyre*

The novel right from its onset treats mystical elements with great importance. Supernatural elements are introduced in the text at various instances right from Jane's childhood, such as the episode in which she apparently encounters her uncle's ghost in the red room, to Rochester mistaking Jane Eyre as an elf and finally Jane hearing Rochester calling out to her from Ferndean, miles away from the moors. Dreams, presentiments, premonitions, and visions guide Jane Eyre as she embarks on her journey and such coincidences show that a greater force is at work in the novel. There is scope for analysis on the degree and extent to which Charlotte Brontë's successors have retained or refashioned the text's mysticism.

❖ Narrative techniques and stylistic devices in *Jane Eyre* adaptations

Jane Eyre is rich in stylistic devices like allusions, allegory, symbolism, and so on and relies on bildungsroman and the first person and the linear narrative mode for plot progression. The stylistics of the texts chosen for the study differs greatly from the source novel predominantly because of the differences in the narrative medium, genres, points of view and so on. A study on the narrative and stylistic techniques of the adaptations is therefore significant.

❖ Relevance of inheritance and marriage laws in Victorian society in *Jane Eyre*

While Brontë barely enlightens her readers of the influence of the inheritance laws and marriage laws of the Victorian period in the motivation of her characters, a contemporary reader would appreciate greater insights into the text's social context for fathoming the psychological tensions of Brontë's character. For instance,

Rochester's status as an unfavoured second son was primarily driven by inheritance laws of the society into which he was born and brought up. While adaptations view Rochester's inability to divorce Bertha, owing to stringent regulations in dissolving marriages, as a legitimisation of Rochester's indulgence with mistresses across Europe, it is also used to incriminate Rochester for confining Bertha, and acquiring her property. Twenty first century readers of *Jane Eyre* can hardly imagine a world in which married women are not permitted to control their money, mothers do not have the right to take part in their own children's life without the consent of the father and women are not allowed to enter professions.

❖ Significance of art in *Jane Eyre*

Art serves an integral purpose in the development of Jane's identity and in the episodes of her courtship with Rochester. Jane is portrayed as an artist of some skill, who uses art as an escape from her isolation. The choice of her subjects and the colour tones of the paintings, to an extent reflect Jane's psyche. She visualises her deepest feelings through her drawings that at times mirror the stark contrast in the realities of the lives of women of the upper and middle classes. However, the novel has dark undertones in its attitudes towards Celine and Adele's art and skill. A study on the portrayal of art in *Jane Eyre* and its adaptations can be carried out to uncover the nationalist prejudices of the source text, retained or rejected by her successors.

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