

Five British Writers

Day 21
(of 28)



Novel Form

- *Jane Eyre* as a *Bildungsroman*, *Kunstlerroman* ?

distinctive use of first-person child narrator, telling not only of child's development but of storyteller's development

- *Jane Eyre* resembles aspects of the picaresque novel and sentimental/seduction novel (especially the gothic)

social and class satire, concern with values and virtues, along with an interest in supernatural fascinations

Repeating Structures —and change

- Gateshead
(schoolboy) John Reed

Mrs. Reed

“What would uncle Reed say to you, if he were alive?” (36) Ch. 4

Eliza, Georgiana, Bessie, Abbot

- Lowood
(distant overseer) Mr. Brocklehurst

Miss Temple

“she has to answer to Mr. Brocklehurst for all she does” (61) Ch. 5

Miss Miller, Miss Scatcherd, Helen Burns

- Thornfield
(initially absent) Mr. Rochester

Mrs. Fairfax

“I am only the housekeeper—the manager” (115) Ch. 11

Adela/Adèle, Sophie, Leah, Grace Poole

*How has Jane changed from a pupil to a teacher?
What aspects of Adela resemble Jane as a child?*

In what way has Jane NOT changed? How is her ‘declaration of independence’ expressed here?

“Women feel just as men feel” (125-6)

These paragraphs near the beginning of Chapter 12 have attracted a great deal of scholarly attention.

- Brontë is influenced by the rhetoric of the French revolution here, as she did in her preface to the second edition, which she would later regret: “I read my preface with some pain—I did not like it. I wrote it when I was a little enthusiastic...about the French revolution. I wish I had written it in a cool moment” (see notes in your edition 503-4).
- Virginia Woolf, a later novelist famous for writing another declaration of women’s rights in her *A Room of One’s Own* did not like this passage. She thought Brontë both lost control of her realist vision and betrays that the writer of the novel is a woman. (What is the narrator’s voice supposed to be? Contrast the opening of Ch. 10 with Ch. 11)
- This moment of narrator intrusion is almost immediately followed by the bizarre and mysterious laugh. This is an important juxtaposition. Is the laugh scornful of Jane? Or does it suggest an alliance between Jane and the mysterious things going on the third floor?

Narrator and Character/ Body and Spirit

- Let's look at narrative and control in the extended conversation between Jane and Rochester in chapter 14.

“Speak...I leave both the choice of subject and the manner of treating it entirely to yourself”

“I proceed almost as freely as if I were writing my thoughts in a diary”

“I talk like a Spinx” “the Lowood constraint”

Rochester is also a storyteller... and an actor...

- The ‘science’ of Physiognomy

ch.14 (149-151), ch. 17 (200), ch.19 (223)

Words and Pictures



1839, Anne Brontë, age 19

- What is the significance of Jane's portfolio?
Ch. 13 (142-144)
What is the use of the painting of Blanche and the charcoal of herself?
Ch. 16 (183-4) 17 (195-6)
Why do you think Jane draws Rochester's portrait at Gateshead?
Ch. 21 (262)

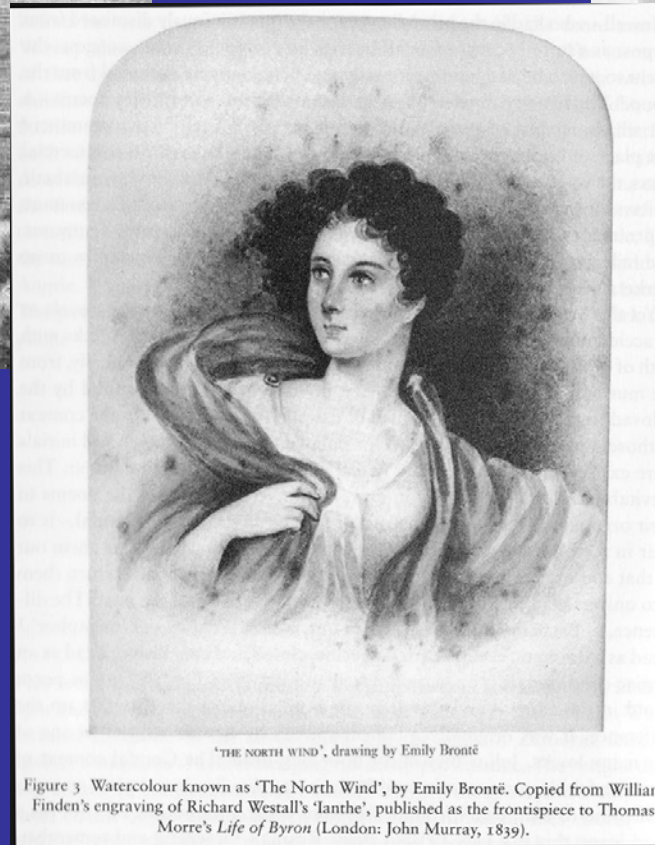


Figure 3 Watercolour known as 'The North Wind', by Emily Brontë. Copied from William Finden's engraving of Richard Westall's 'Ianthé', published as the frontispiece to Thomas Morre's *Life of Byron* (London: John Murray, 1839).

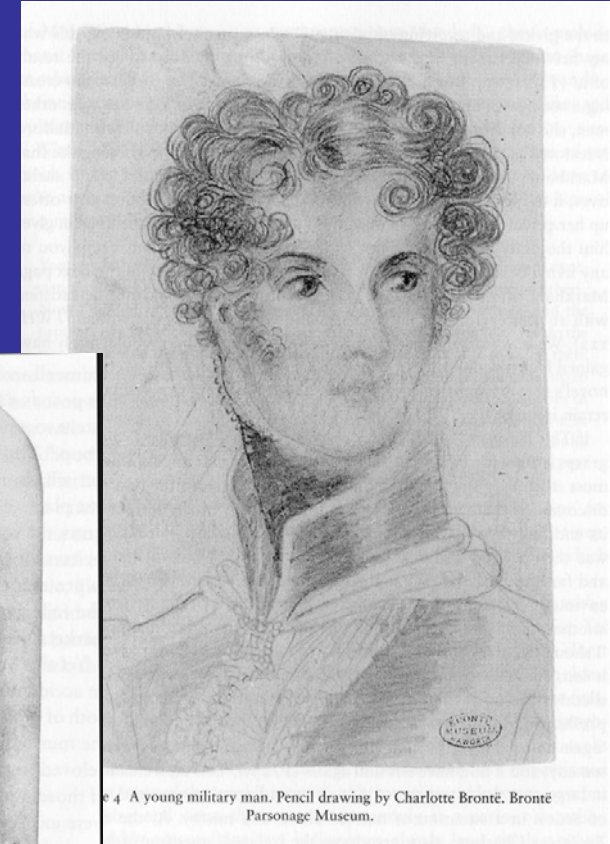


Figure 4 A young military man. Pencil drawing by Charlotte Brontë. Brontë Parsonage Museum.

The Gothic

*“Where was I? Did I wake or sleep?
Had I been dreaming? Did I dream still?” (227) Ch. 19*

Realism and Romance

- The departure for Thornfield (Ch. 10)
Kind fairy/Newspaper Ad (101)
- Thornfield itself (Ch. 11)
Precise descriptions but house structure gets vaguer on the way up...
(Brontë herself confused the second and third story, as noted in your introduction, viii)
First floor: “a fairy space” but “merely a very pretty drawing-room” (119)
Second floor: “a vault-like air” but “ordinary modern style” (113)
Third floor: “battlements...picturesque” (114)
“air of antiquity...ghosts...coffin-dust” (121)
“black as a vault...like some corridor in Bluebeard’s castle” (122)

- Jane and Rochester
Bessie’s Gytrash (128) Ch. 12

Elf, fairy, sprite, thing, angel...or governess?
Rochester’s fairy tales
(139) Ch.13
Jane’s insistence on her humanity and position (153) Ch. 14
The Mysterious Fire
“demoniac laugh...goblin-laughter...something gurgled and moaned...is she possessed with a devil?” (168)
Ch. 15
The Gypsy and “web of mystification” (225)
Ch.19
The Mysterious Visitor and the “web of horror” (237) Ch. 20
Dreams and Death Ch. 21

Textual Structure

“I thought of Helen Burns” (266) Ch. 21*

Resurgam at last?

As opposed to more immediately fulfilled promises:

The penultimate chapter of the first volume:

“I’ll explain all this some day” (159) Ch. 14*

Last chapter:

“I rose as soon as day dawned” (172) Ch. 15

*These promised subjects were among the most shocking of the novel

Ch. 15 (160-5) “The matter-of-fact way in which she, a girl of nineteen...receives his revelations of his former life, is both revolting and improbable” James Lorimer, *North British Review* XI (1849): 475-93 (note on 515 of your edition)

Ch. 21 (269) Dismay at reading “a deathbed of unrepentant sin described with as deliberate a minuteness and as severe a tranquillity as a naturalist might display in recording the mortal orgasms [death throes] of a jelly-fish” (*Christian Remembrancer* June 1848, cited in notes 519)

Closure at Gateshead

- How does Jane ‘throw the book back’ at John Reed and his family in Chapter 21?
“The inanimate objects were not changed: but the living things had altered beyond recognition” (256)

Next Class: *the center of Jane Eyre*

‘I know no medium...between absolute submission and determined revolt’ (446)

We will discuss how the features noted thus far (the expression of authority and control, body and spirit, elements of the gothic, textual structure, etc.) play a part in this climax in *Jane Eyre*.

Any questions on the essay due a week from today?