The final chapters of volume 1 of *Jane Eyre* describing Jane's first months at Thornfield offer a bewildering variety of clashing generic signals, as we have seen. These signals not only educate expectations but also evoke selective recollection of earlier details of the text. Jane is now a governess, which, for those familiar with the genre, generates the retrospective, centripetal pulling together of such incidents as the deathbed scene of Helen Burns, a scene common in such novels, and the prospective anticipation of what Jane is to find in her new career. Many such novels are didactic tours, showing how not to treat governesses and how not to rear a child; the heroine moves from one unsatisfactory position to another, sampling the ills of masters, mistresses, and children. Some governesses, like Caroline and Clara Mordaunt or Mrs. Ross's Gertrude Walcot in *The Governess; Or, Politics in Private Life* (or the fictional governess that Charlotte Brontë knew but readers of 1847 did not, Agnes Grey), are subjected to vulgar tyranny, sometimes, but not always, by the newly rich bourgeoisie. Many of the pupils are spoiled brats, protected by willfully blind and pampering parents. So Adèle (flighty, a bit spoiled, but redeemable) and Mrs. Fairfax (respectable, accommodating, and, most important, willing to leave the training of Adèle to Jane) do not seem likely to make their governess's life miserable: "The promise of a smooth career, which my first calm introduction to Thornfield-Hall seemed to pledge,
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was not belied on a longer acquaintance with the place and its inmates” (131). All of which is pleasant enough, but where is the real knowledge of life for Jane or the suspense and illumination for the reader?

The fact that there is a Mr. Rochester who is Jane’s actual employer, the talk of ghosts, and especially the preternatural laugh, which incident immediately preceded this passage promising tranquillity, may have promised something else, perhaps something Gothic. However, the appearance of the apparent source of the laugh, Grace Poole—“any apparition less romantic or less ghostly could scarcely be imagined” (130)—seems to have satisfied Jane. The incident is not just passed over quickly, it seems to have been dismissed; and there is no hint of dialogical response or qualification by the narrator. If active readers expect something more, even something romantic or ghostly, from the third story, they must separate themselves from the consciousness of young Jane and reduce her authority. However, even if both the ghostly laugh and the existence of Rochester are, with Jane’s assistance, pushed into the background of the reader’s mind, they still lie there dormant, capable of being aroused by further developments.

One source of expectations that has been backgrounded for a time—what we have been calling the Godwinian motif—now comes forward again and pulls into the present past details of the text. Jane’s story began in rebellion; her intractability caused her to be ejected from Gateshead and sent to Lowood Institution. When Miss Temple leaves, taking Jane’s “reason for tranquillity” (100) with her, Jane’s adventurous spirit urges her to enter the wider world, to gain experience, whatever the danger. Now, in the tranquillity of her new position, after the excitement of the change, she yearns for more “practical experience”; she wants to meet more people and encounter “more vivid kinds of goodness” than that exemplified by Mrs. Fairfax or Adèle:

Who blames me? Many no doubt; and I shall be called discontented. I cannot help it: the restlessness was in my nature; it agitated me to pain sometimes. Then my sole relief was to walk along the corridor of the third story . . . and allow my mind’s eye to dwell on whatever bright visions rose before it . . . ; to let my heart be heaved by exultant movement, while it swelled it in trouble, expanded it with life; and, best of all, to open my

. . . . . . .
THE TRANSGENERIC TOPIC, LOVE

inward ear to a tale that was never ended—a tale my imagination created, and narrated continuously; quickened with all of incident, life, fire, feeling, that I desired and had not in my actual existence. (132)

Jane strikes the Godwinian note, feminist, rebellious, perhaps morally dangerous:

It is vain to say human beings ought to be satisfied with tranquillity; they must have action; and they will make it if they cannot find it. Millions are condemned to a stiller doom than mine, and millions are in silent revolt against their lot. Nobody knows how many rebellions besides political rebellions ferment in the masses of life which people earth. Women are supposed to be very calm generally; but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties, and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. It is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex. (132–33)

Such sentiments are “occupied utterances,” commonplaces—ideological topoi, as it were—in the Godwin tradition. The eponymous heroine of Mary Hays’s *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796), for example, finds that since her inheritance is insufficient to support her, she must support herself to remain independent. But how? She is dissatisfied with life as a teacher or governess and yearns for freedom and a wider world:

I might, perhaps, be allowed to officiate, as an assistant, in the school where I had been placed in my childhood . . . [like Jane]; but this was a species of servitude, and my mind panted for freedom, for social intercourse, for scenes in motion, where the active curiosity of my temper might find a scope wherein to range and speculate. . . . Cruel prejudices! I exclaimed—hapless woman! Why was I not educated for commerce, for a profession, for labour? Why have I been rendered feeble and delicate by bodily constraint, and fastidious by artificial refinement? Why are we bound by the habits of society, as with an adamant chain? Why do we
suffer ourselves to be confined within a magic circle, without daring, by a magnanimous effort, to dissolve the barbarous spell? (1:54-55)

The desire for freedom and rebellion against the servitude of women's roles such as that of teacher are analogous to those in Jane Eyre, but this is an even more overt call for rebellion against the constraints of gender in British society than is Jane's. That such frustrations of desire may break out in other channels, leading some women into moral disaster or turning back on the minds of strong women to destroy them—dangers implicit in the Brontë passage—is explicit in Hays:

While men pursue interest, honour, pleasure, as accords with their several dispositions, women, who have too much delicacy, sense, and spirit, to degrade themselves by the vilest of all interchanges, remain insulated beings, and must be content tamely to look on, without taking any part in the great, though often absurd and tragical, drama of life. Hence the eccentricities of conduct, with which women of superior minds have been accused—the struggles, the despairing though generous struggles, of an ardent spirit, denied a scope for its exertions! The strong feelings, and strong energies, which properly directed, in a field sufficiently wide, might—ah! what might they not have aided? forced back, and pent up, ravage and destroy the mind which gave them birth! (1:169)

Comments restive or revolutionary are common in women's novels of the period. Geraldine Jewsbury, for example, thought of as an English disciple of George Sand, "particularly demands the enlargement of the sphere of women's activities" (Jerrold's 7 [1848]: 370, reviewing Jewsbury's The Half Sisters). The first-person narrator in Margaret Russell: An Autobiography (1846) cries out, as Jane does, for action, even duty: "My thirst, my longing, was for action: I yearned for some strong necessity to call me out of myself; some duty, some material for the capacities of my nature to work upon" (101). Jane's feminist yearnings are thus refracted by the already occupied "word," so that her projected future is endangered in new ways: she may be tempted by "the vilest of all interchanges," and though her spirit will make her resist, her religious skepticism may undermine such resistance; even should she resist, her strength, her very energy, may de-
stroy her mind, for energy, strong passions, and madness are closely allied in the repertoire, as the Hays passage suggests.

There is another strong voice in the dialogue besides the Godwinian, however. The didactic, centripetal governess novel often chastises such Godwinian passions, as in the case of, among others, Ellen ("the teacher") Delville, who was a bit too "passionate," whereas the heroine of the centrifugal, Godwinian Hays novel rejects teaching and tutoring for passion and "life." Predicting Jane's future and defining the moral universe of Brontë's novel, however, is more complicated than merely anticipating one or the other of these outcomes, for other possibilities are foreshadowed by other generic signals. The Godwinian passages are immediately followed by two paragraphs concerning "Grace Poole's" laugh.

The "silent revolt" passage has now been refracted for us by considerable critical comment and ideological echoes. Virginia Woolf, in *A Room of One's Own*, feels there is an "awkward break" between that passage and Grace Poole's laugh because female rage wells up in Brontë and makes her move away from the topic. Later critics, like Elaine Showalter, wonder why such an innocent and commonplace abruptness so disturbed Woolf (and her answer, as Cora Kaplan puts it, is that the problem is not Brontë's but Woolf's "inability to come to terms with her sexuality, with sexuality itself" [172]). Kaplan for her part convincingly finds that, though seemingly incoherent, there is not so much a break as a submerged relationship between the passage and the laugh (170-73). She points out that the passage is not narrowly feminist but includes "human beings" and "millions," many of whom are men:

it is a significant moment of incoherence, where the congruence between the subordination of women and the radical view of class oppression becomes, for a few sentences, irresistible. It is a tentative, partial movement in spite of its defiant rhetoric, a movement which threatens to break up the more general, self-conscious [conventional] class politics of the text. And it brings with it, inexorably, its own narrative reaction which attempts with some success, to warn us quite literally that the association of feminism and class struggle leads to madness. (173)
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This cogent and convincing reading is a splendid example of a view of the text that it cannot have of itself.

The scene is immediately followed—though three months have passed in the fictional world—by Jane’s encounter in the woods with the stranger who falls from his horse. Though Jane sees in this incident no seeds of further developments—"The incident had occurred and was gone for me: it was an incident of no moment, no romance, no interest in a sense; yet it marked with change one single hour of a monotonous life. . . . it was yet an active thing, and I was weary of an existence all passive" (140)—the reader’s dialogic response may be somewhat different.

After all, who is this Rochester? Maidens alone in castles (or manor houses) in which there is some mystery are often threatened by gentlemen of rank, masters, Gothic villains. There is also the threat of Jane’s “morally suspect” feminism, rebellion, Godwinism: will these flaws let her play into the hands of The Vile Seducer? On the other hand, unprotected governesses sometimes marry gentlemen, even their masters. Though the scowling figure does not resemble the heroes of governess novels at this point, love, that topic present in virtually all genres and belonging to none, may in one form or another be entering the world of Jane Eyre.

There have been earlier intimations of that possibility inserted into the reader’s repertoire which this new possibility may recall. Single notes on the theme of love have been sounded from the beginning of the novel. If the novel opens as it does because the initial episode marks Jane’s first moment of rebellion and therefore the beginning of her independent life, the condition of that rebellion involves not only John Reed’s cruelty but Jane’s exile from the happy family group near the fire. The only outlet for her love at Gateshead is her doll: “Human beings must love something, and, in the dearth of worthier objects of affection, I contrived to find pleasure in loving and cherishing a faded graven image, shabby as a miniature scarecrow” (29). Giving love and happiness is some solace, but not enough. She tells her aunt, “You think I have no feelings, and that I can do without one bit of love or kindness; but I cannot live so” (39). Later, she tells Helen that even self-approval and a clear conscience are not enough if there is no love:
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... if others don’t love me, I would rather die than live—I cannot bear to be solitary and hated, Helen. Look here: to gain some real affection from you, or Miss Temple, or any other whom I truly love, I would willingly submit to have the bone of my arm broken, or to let a bull toss me, or to stand behind a kicking horse, and let it dash its hoof at my chest. (80)

Such willingness to suffer to gain love in so passionate, rebellious, and self-reliant a character may very well foreshadow transgression and suffering, as the Hays passage suggests. Love and rebellion are linked in Jane’s passionate nature: “I must resist those who punish me unjustly,” she told Helen earlier. “It is as natural as that I should love those who show me affection, or submit to punishment when I feel it is deserved” (65). Then Helen urged turning the other cheek; now she emphasizes the limits of self-reliance and human love: “Hush, Jane! you think too much of the love of human beings; you are too impulsive, too vehement; the sovereign hand that created your frame, and put life into it, has provided you with other resources than your feeble self, or than creatures feeble as you” (81). Regardless of how we perceive it, Helen’s warning becomes part of the heteroglossic world of the novel, at the very least an anticipatory caution: In the world of Jane Eyre, “love of human beings” in all instances and circumstances may not be an altogether moral and happy affair. And yet it is a love story that seems to be building in the final chapters of volume 1.

Though at Lowood there was no intimation of romantic love, Jane did know human love there, at first for Helen, then Miss Temple. For Miss Temple she feels more awe than ardor (85) and receives more kindness and affection than love. She feels warmer and more protective toward Helen, but without the serenity of her feelings toward Miss Temple. Even so qualified, love makes bleak Lowood preferable to the bourgeois comforts of Gateshead:

Well has Solomon said: — “Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.”

I would not have exchanged Lowood with all its privation, for Gateshead and its daily luxuries. (87)

None of this, however, suggests a love story. Helen dies; Miss Temple marries and leaves Lowood; Jane grows up, and she too leaves

...
Lowood. It is on her first morning at Thornfield that the muted note of romantic love is struck. Jane awakens anticipating that her new life will provide "flowers and pleasures, as well as its thorns and toils . . . : not perhaps that day or that month, but at an indefinite future period" (118). She dresses as attractively as possible:

I sometimes regretted that I was not handsomer: I sometimes wished to have rosy cheeks, a straight nose, and small cherry mouth; I desired to be tall, stately, and finely developed in figure; I felt it a misfortune that I was so little, so pale, and had features so irregular and so marked. And why had I these aspirations and these regrets? It would be difficult to say: I could not then distinctly say it to myself; yet I had a reason, and a logical, natural reason too. (118–19)

The placement of this passage is puzzling. The logical and natural reason for Jane's attention to her appearance would seem to relate, certainly in retrospect, to her desire for romantic love, yet the passage appears a page before she learns there is a master and a Rochester and thus a possibility of romantic love even in dull Thornfield. A dozen pages later, Jane paces the third-story corridor, listening with her inner ear to a "tale that was never ended—a tale my imagination created and narrated continuously; quickened with all of incident, life, fire, feeling, that I desired and had not in my actual experience" (132). If this tale is also the tale of love, it too would seem premature, for Mr. Rochester does not appear for three or four more pages. Of course the narrator knows what is coming—she is, indeed, now Mrs. Rochester—and she (or Brontë) may be manipulating the sequence to heighten suspense or prepare the first-time reader for what good things are to come. There is a more subtle narrative possibility: though these passages are immediately followed by reference to Rochester, he may be another ignis fatuus, a red herring smeared across the narrative line to misdirect the expectations of the reader away from what will be the true outcome; this doubt may be reinforced by the ambiguity of Rochester's character—is he Byronic hero or Gothic villain? Finally, there is the more "agnostic" function: placing Jane's desire for and openness to love first creates expectations of her finding it, but introducing it before the introduction of Rochester makes him only one possibility, an im-
mediate but not exclusive possibility. The "tale" passage, for example, in the context of the paragraph in which it appears, could refer to ventures or adventures uncommon for women and unrelated to love. Or—a possibility we may have reason to remember later—there may be a rival romantic hero.

Though the "logical and natural reason" for Jane's concern for her physical appearance and the subject of the tale her imagination continuously told her may be inferred from what follows, neither is specifically addressed by the narrative; both are "permanent gaps" in the text. The gaps are at the whim or discretion of the narrator. She is here withholding not only the reason and the tale but also, as she does throughout, all the information we are anxious to learn about Jane's future—we have not been told who or what occupies the third story of Thornfield, nor have we been told that the narrator is Mrs. Jane Rochester. The obvious purpose of such withholding is the generation of suspense or mystification, an end critics deplore (Booth 255) but readers demand, and the popularity of Jane Eyre then and now is in no small measure dependent on its brilliant modulation of mystery. Manipulating suspense does not necessarily make a work second-rate, as Booth implies, however, nor does eschewing it necessarily make for better art. The plot of Caroline Mordaunt is in many respects quite similar to that of Jane Eyre, and its outcome and "message" are revealed in the first paragraph; yet it is significantly inferior to Jane Eyre, and the early demystification is part of the reason (see below, ch. 7). In Jane Eyre the narrator's reticence generates suspense, but it also shrouds a larger mystery: what kind of fictional world is here embodied? As we shall see, the reader's blind experience in the "middest," remaining as ignorant as Jane, is essential to the moral purpose of the novel. Mystery or suspense often operates in this fashion: it engages the reader in shaping the fiction and the world of the fiction, projecting first one, then another configuration, uncovering, questioning, challenging the reader's assumption about cosmic and human reality. Plot in such a novel, and Jane Eyre is one, is a function of the fictional ontology; plot is a trivial concern only when the ontological base of the fiction is insignificant.
The narrator knows what will happen next, or, more accurately, what has already happened in the narrational past that is in the fictional future, but she chooses not to say, choosing to take advantage of the convention of the narrative past tense to give the illusion that the action is unfolding even as we read. Occasionally, however, she will draw back from the younger Jane, as in generalizing that children cannot argue with adults without feeling bad afterward, or explaining that the light in the red-room was probably from a lantern, or telling us that fifteen years after Helen's death an engraved marble tablet was placed on her grave. Sometimes the narrator will indicate that there is a space between her consciousness and Jane's without specifying what her new knowledge is, as in the passage wherein she says that "then" she could not have defined the reason she was concerned about her appearance. The occasional direct intrusion of the narrator's voice, separating her consciousness from that of the younger Jane, paradoxically calls attention to the fact that the narrative language and consciousness is most of the time doubled or "hybridized," "a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another" (Bakhtin, Dialogic 358). The difference between the consciousnesses of the two Janes lies not only in the elder's knowledge of what is to happen in the fictional future but also in their epistemological and ontological views. The hybridized narration is not the mixture of "two impersonal language consciousnesses... but rather a mixture of two individualized language consciousnesses... and two individual language intentions as well: the individual, representing authorial consciousness and will [i.e., here the narrator Jane], on the one hand, and the individualized linguistic consciousness and will of the character represented [i.e., the younger Jane], on the other" (Bakhtin, Dialogic 359). The intentional novelistic hybrid (hybridization also takes places unintentionally in real language) does not only mix two language consciousnesses but presents "the collision between the differing points of views on the world that are embedded in these forms" (Bakhtin, Dialogic 360).

The momentary separation of the voices of the two Janes makes us scan the possibilities, alerting us to the variety of signals. We do not...
yet know what the elder Jane is like, from what vantage—or disadvan-
tage—she is writing, so though we cannot say that we read such pas-
sages with full knowledge of their import, we know that there is some
difference in the perspectives of the younger and older Jane. The text
from time to time tells us as much, but it does not always specify just
when either voice is speaking or whether both are, as it were, speaking
at once, hybridized. Narrative complexity as well as mixed generic sig-
nals alerts us to the multitude of possibilities of future events and of
interpretation, and undermines simple conventional or preconceived
certainty as to outcome or meaning. Doubt on both scores propels us
forward, but we are meanwhile experiencing—or, in effect, creating—
other futures, other outcomes, other novels, other worlds, all of which
remain part of our total experience of Jane Eyre.

The narrator presumably also controls the pacing, the timing not
only of revelations (of who or what is upstairs, for example) but also
of juxtapositions, such as the placing of the natural concern of appear-
ances before the mention of Rochester, and the imagined tale of fire
and feeling before his actual appearance. The narrator does not fully
control, however, the intertextuality, the dialogue of the narrative with
contemporary and other novels and the consequent refraction; but
this does not necessarily imply that a third consciousness or source
of construction, the author—Charlotte Brontë a.k.a. Currer Bell—is in
total control: “The author (speaker) has his own inalienable right to
the word, but the listener [reader] also has his rights, and those whose
voices are heard in the word before the author comes upon it [the fic-
tional context] also have their rights. . . . [The word] is performed out-
side the author, and it cannot be introjected into the author” (Bakhtin,
Speech 121-22).

The first encounter between Jane and Rochester in the lane re-
verberates with a variety of fictional kinds, so that what we might
think of as the “normal” anticipation—[somewhat long-in-the-tooth-]
boy-meets-girl—is to a degree inhibited or retarded. Perhaps it is not
just the films and fame of Jane Eyre that make less informed readers
“know” from the beginning that Rochester is to be a romantic hero
but also readers’ deafness to the cacophony of generic signals and to
the subtleties of the first-person narration. Guessing “right” sometimes
may mean reading "wrong," that is, missing not so much the "meaning" as the participatory experiencing of the text.

If there is anything approaching a clear generic signal in the lane scene, it is the Gothic or pseudo-Gothic, a signal that may be loud enough at this point to mute the note of conventional romantic love. It was, after all, only at the end of the previous chapter (ch. 11) that the strange laugh broke the stillness, and, we have even more recently been told, Jane has frequently heard the laugh these past three months.

Since romantic love of the usual sort is not foremost in the reader's mind, we are better able to accept the fact that the appearance of "the master" does not inevitably arouse romantic thoughts in Jane's mind. At the beginning of the next chapter (ch. 13), the stranger in the lane has been identified as Rochester, and he is now in residence at Thornfield. What his presence means to her at first is not the possibility of love, but what Hays's Emma called "scenes in motion" (1:54), for Jane the welcome end of tranquillity:

Thornfield Hall was a changed place; no longer silent as a church, it echoed every hour or two to a knock at the door or a clang of the bell; steps, too, often traversed the hall, and new voices spoke in different keys below: a rill from the outer world was flowing through it; it had a master: for my part, I liked it better. (144)

The narrator's voice stays doubled with Jane's and does not help us read that final clause. Jane was bored with the tranquillity of Thornfield as she had been with that of Lowood in her last days there. She is seeking knowledge of life, and whether that knowledge will be of love or from "new voices in different keys," we cannot as yet be sure.

That first evening, before she is summoned into the master's presence, she stares into the fire, where she sees something like a castle on the Rhine. The picture is broken up by Mrs. Fairfax entering with the summons, her entrance "scattering too some heavy, unwelcome thoughts that were beginning to throng on my solitude" (145). The narrator again does not separate her voice from Jane's, does not reveal what these thoughts were: Is Jane fearful that Rochester will never seek her company? that no one will? Is she hurt by Adèle's telling her that Rochester asked that day whether the governess was that small,
thin, pale person? At the moment this unexplained gloom serves to darken the tone of the forthcoming scene, vaguely encouraging the notion that even if Rochester does pay her attention Jane would be well advised to curb her impetuosity: this “love,” even if it comes, may be less than happy.

Like her earlier aspirations and regrets and the pictures her imagination made, the definition of these heavy unwelcome thoughts is also left blank, the narrator never returning to define them, and so they remain permanent gaps in the text. Though we can never fill them in with certainty, we do not know at this point that we cannot, and so we are urged, if we are reading intensively, to scan once more the textual and contextual horizon for interpretations of the narrative reticence and its implications, attending both to point of view and genre. This is not necessarily an emphatic or enduring pause in our reading. We may be scarcely conscious of the pause and retrospective/prospective action of our focus, so that when the gap is neither filled nor enlarged upon, we may forget its very existence. It would seem logical that on second reading, knowing that this gap will not be filled and so is inconsequential in the outcome of the novel, we would be less likely to pause, and so the gap would lose its functional control over our attention. Paradoxically, the opposite is more likely to be true: knowing that nothing will be made of this, perhaps a little less eager to turn the page and get to the bottom of the mystery than on first reading, we are all the more likely to pause here and explore the implications and function of the gap.

What is true here of the gap is more true than is usually recognized of the function of details and devices in the text: they continue to operate on the reader during subsequent readings, though perhaps with slightly different degrees of force and effect. The strategies of the text that may seem designed for suspense and other aspects of a first reading are a permanent part of the pattern of the text. A straight line and a maze with identical termini do not constitute identical patterns. A second reading that heads right for the exit does not improve, but impoverishes, our appreciation of the text.

As if to mark the gap or emphasize the pause and so to keep our mind hovering over the text, scanning back and forth—or per-
haps to make us content to remain within the confines of young Jane’s language and consciousness—the gloomy thoughts at the fire are followed by an interview with Rochester in which Jane is at her best. She is realistic but not materialistic. She expects no gifts and is not sure she would want one. She gives her honest opinion of Brocklehurst—he is a harsh, pompous, meddling man. Put at her ease by Rochester’s gruff manner, which does away with the need for polite evasions, she is free to be her candid, forthright self. But if Rochester is as charmed by her as we are, and if he is not an honorable man, will honesty alone suffice?

Jane is loving, passionate, generous, direct, and honest; she is not greedy or grasping, cruel or mean-minded. Her need for love and her temper, however, may signal danger in her circumstances: Is she too passionate or tempestuous, too independent and self-reliant, especially for a young woman? Will real knowledge come at too high a price, the perils of her ego and ignorance being greater than the prize? Despite the first-person narration, we do not always know what she is thinking then, and because of the hybridization we do not know how the elder narrator views all of young Jane’s thoughts and actions in these scenes. Unless we are reading “mono-aurally,” listening only for the voice that is an echo of our own, we do not know for certain whether Jane is properly prudent, or excitingly, admirably independent; we do not know what to expect, what kind of novel we are reading, what kind of moral universe we are in. And so we are engaged in a dialogue of expectation with the text.

If what we anticipate depends largely on our view of Jane, it may depend even more on how we see Rochester: is he Byronic hero or Gothic villain? We must look at him more closely now as he half-reclines there on the couch. But what we see is only what the young Jane sees; the voice of the narrator is subsumed within young Jane’s, and the voices “heard in the word before the author [came] upon it” are not conclusive. The initial physical description of him sends out mixed signals. He is not entirely attractive or attractively ugly. True, his nose is decisive and indicative of character, but beware: his nostrils denote, “[Jane] thought, choler; his . . . mouth, chin, and jaw . . . were very grim,” and he was “neither tall nor graceful” (146). His actions
and words do little to clarify his moral character. His brusque manner is not entirely charming, and he is masterful to the point of being rude (even though he apologizes, explaining that he is used to command). We cannot be sure just what he thinks of Jane. He is grumpily pleased—"Humph!" he says—at Jane's sharp answer when he accuses her of false modesty; he admits she plays the piano better than "some" English schoolgirls; and he assumes that her drawing master did the best parts of the watercolors she shows him. Then he says brusquely, as if merely to show his power—or is it that he is too pleased by her forthrightness?—"There,—put the drawings away! . . . It is nine o'clock: what are you about, Miss Eyre, to let Adèle sit up so long? Take her to bed" (155).

This first acquaintance with Rochester is immediately followed by Mrs. Fairfax's sketchy history of his brother's injustice toward Edward, the brother's sudden death, and the present Mr. Rochester's brief and sporadic visits to Thornfield. The Gothic possibilities here, if they do not obscure, certainly overshadow whatever romantic possibilities there may be at this point. Romance from Rochester is more a threat than a promise.

If there is to be a love story, the next chapter (ch. 14) begins inauspiciously: Rochester is busy and sees little of Jane for several days. His excuse is hardly that of a would-be lover: "I have almost forgotten you . . . ; other ideas have driven yours from my head" (162). Though tonight he wants to talk and listen and seems more pleasant, Jane suspects the change may merely be the effect of wine (159). The scene that ensues, however, is one of the most delightful in the novel. It is difficult to believe ill of Rochester, to resist his gruff charm and intriguing air of misery and mystery. We cannot feel Jane in danger either from him or from herself. She is at once her sauciest and most moral. She sees in his eyes something more than the glitter of wine: "He had great, dark eyes, and very fine eyes, too; not without a certain change in their depths sometimes, which, if it was not softness, reminded you, at least, of that feeling" (160). But when he asks if she finds him handsome, she cannot tell a lie: "No, sir." Nor does she find him benevolent, though he is no fool; her diagnosis is partly based on, partly confirmed by, phrenology:
He lifted up the sable waves of hair which lay horizontally over his brow, and showed a solid enough mass of intellectual organs; but an abrupt deficiency where the suave signs of benevolence should have risen.

"... No, young lady, I am not a general philanthropist; but I bear a conscience"; and he pointed to the prominences which are said to indicate that faculty—and which, fortunately for him, were sufficiently conspicuous. (161)

Phrenology is an "occupied" word. For us it is a pseudoscience, and we read this passage as quaint, even, perhaps, vaguely amusing. Phrenology early in the nineteenth century was not, however, associated with pseudoscience but with neurological science itself; its premise, that there was a connection between the body and psyche, was considered in some quarters sacrilegious, and Jane and Rochester's use of it thus may be dangerous. See, e.g., Captain Marryat's Mr. Midshipman Easy (1836), in which the eponymous moral hero (not to say, prig) flees his father's house because of his father's unholy experiments in changing the shape of the skull in order to change character (an early analogue of genetic engineering?). When the hero returns, having been successful within the more rigid and "moral" regimen of the Royal Navy, the old man has killed himself by having crushed his own skull. This novel gives the same warning as Mary Shelley's Frankenstein; Or, The Modern Prometheus: we should not mess with God's world. (See also Feltes.) This reliance on "science" rather than more conventional social and religious signs for the reading of character on the part of Jane and Rochester may have reinforced somewhat the radical, dangerous Godwinism that plays some part in the structure and strategy of Jane Eyre and so angered critics like Elizabeth Rigby. It seems to outradical a Wollstonecraft/Shelley. It may also serve as an anticipatory caution, warning us that all may not be morally well in the future relationship between Rochester and Jane.

Both Rochester and Jane recognize that their reading of the other's character may be wrong, that the other may have as yet unperceived "intolerable defects" (165). Rochester admits to defects, though he insists he is no villain, but only "a trite common-place sinner, hackneyed in all the poor petty dissipations with which the rich and worthless
try to put on life,” and like the other “defaulters” lays “half the blame on ill fortune and adverse circumstances” (165).

Jane takes the moral high ground, recommending repentance and reformation as the cures for remorse, and warning him that he cannot himself make up new moral laws no matter what the circumstances: “The human and fallible should not arrogate a power with which the divine and perfect alone can be safely entrusted” (169). Rochester insists that she is too inexperienced to judge such matters, and indeed it is difficult to imagine just where she came up with such views. Perhaps from Miss Temple or Helen? Are these earned insights or echoes of others? Jane herself has arrogated the power of vengeance and, though remorseful afterward, does not seem to have repented or reformed. Humility before a power greater than hers does not at this point seem one of Jane’s most notable virtues. Is this moral voice the voice of the young Jane, of the narrator, or of conventional Christianity? Once more, narrative reticence makes unraveling the hybridized voice of young Jane here difficult. Her serene certainty may be reassuring (Jane has grown up to be a morally mature young woman) or paradoxically ominous (is she speaking out of the pompousness and pretentiousness of inexperience, as Rochester suggests?). We are by our questions or assumed answers in dialogue with young Jane and the text.

Uncertainty is in many way the keynote of the scene. Rochester seems to be making veiled allusions to past actions and present intentions that Jane has difficulty in following. At the height of her discomfort, when Jane wants to terminate the discussion, Rochester says, “Wait a minute: Adèle is not ready to go to bed yet” (171). The child is trying on her new dress, a present from Rochester: “In a few minutes she will re-enter; and I know what I shall see,—a miniature of Céline Varens, as she used to appear on the boards . . . my tenderest feelings are about to receive a shock” (171). As Adèle appears and the chapter ends, the possibility grows still stronger that Céline was the cause of Rochester’s downfall, that Adèle is perhaps his own daughter, that they are the reasons for his remorse. Any marriage of the minds of Jane and Rochester seems to admit the impediments of Céline and Adèle. As the curtain comes down on chapter 14 we seem to be at the base of a love triangle, and that is what we are left to ponder during the space
created by the chapter’s end. Governess and Gothic and all genres and contexts other than that of the conventional love story have been for the moment pushed to the rear.

The gap in the final sentence of the chapter—“I’ll explain all this some day”—proves to be a very temporary one. The explanation comes early in the next chapter; the “threat” of Céline as a rival seems blunted. But as that conflict recedes into the background, a new possibility based on a recently neglected configuration and concern comes to the fore. Even while telling Jane the banal story of his passion for Céline, her betrayal of him, his jealousy—which seems to be building up to another triangle with Jane at the center—he looks up at the battlements of Thornfield with a glare such as I never saw before or since. Pain, shame, ire—impatience, disgust, detestation—seemed momentarily to hold a quivering conflict in the large pupil dilating under his ebon eyebrow . . . another feeling rose and triumphed: something hard and cynical; self-willed and resolute: it settled his passion and petrified his countenance. (175)

This sequence, following so hard on the heels of the story of betrayal, seems to suggest some relationship between Céline and the mystery of Thornfield: Is Céline locked away in the upper reaches of Thornfield Manor? Will Céline, like Mrs. Herbert in “Parson Clare,” escape imprisonment, go beserk, and by mistake kill her own daughter? or, like the legitimate Lady Glenfallen, sneak into Jane’s room to cut her throat? Or does her ghost inhabit the Hall? Though the narrator’s voice is still doubled with young Jane’s, there are other “voices in the word” of this situational topos; they are loud and clear, but not univocal, and though they lead us beyond Jane’s vision, just where is uncertain.

Later, in bed, Jane’s meditations emphasize the connection between Céline and the strange goings-on in the manor by reviewing Rochester’s story, his brief suggestion that he is beginning to like Thornfield again after having hated it for so long, and his complex, intense, emotional glare at the Hall. Jane recalls the look and wonders what alienates him from Thornfield: “I hardly know whether I had slept or not after this musing; at any rate I started wide awake on hearing a vague murmur, peculiar and lugubrious, which sounded, I
thought, just above me. I wished I had kept my candle burning; the night was drearily dark; my spirits were depressed" (182). Something brushes by her door. She has almost fallen asleep when she hears "a demoniac laugh—low, suppressed, and deep—uttered, as it seemed, at the very key-hole of my chamber-door. . . . I thought at first, the goblin-laugher stood at my bedside—or rather, crouched at my pillow" (182). Though some readers might now recall the blind wife in LeFanu's tale, with Jane in the situation of the bigamous usurper, Jane's suspicions are more mundane; she does not conjure up a demon or even an incarcerated wife or mistress but the ordinary if inexplicable Grace Poole. She does wonder, however, if Grace is "possessed with a devil" (183). She goes into the hall and finds that smoke is issuing from Rochester's room. He is unconscious, overcome by smoke, and his bed is on fire. Jane douses his bed and him.

With words and phrases like "demoniac," "goblin-laugher," "unnatural," "possessed with a devil," and emotional signals like "chilled with fear," "affrighted," "scared," "marrow-freezing," "a trembling hand," the Gothic has reentered the picture with a vengeance. Though Jane assumes the arsonist is Grace Poole, Rochester's history, his glare, and the juxtaposition of that and the fire suggest that Céline Varens (dead or alive), rather than the ghost of Rowland Rochester, may be the presence upstairs.

The power of the love story is in the process of obliterating all contrary signals. Indeed, with fires, the heroine in the hero's bedroom in the middle of the night, and veiled references to the possibility of dis-habille, romantic love is verging on sexual love, a border closer to Godwin than Gothic, closer still to Richardson. When a fire in the middle of the night is put out and Lovelace goes to Clarissa to tell her the danger is over, she comes to the door with "nothing on but an under-petticoat, her lovely bosom half-open," as he describes the scene in his letter to John Belford (Letter 225, 723). He embraces her, carries her to the bed, and sits beside her, often referring in his letter to her near-nakedness. He kisses her; she is furious at his treachery; and, though she is induced to forgive him, she says she will not see him for at least a week.

There was, in fact, a much more immediately precedent "word" occupying this narrative space: in Mrs. Jewsbury's Zoe (1845), a fire
scene precipitates a first approach to forbidden love. There the love is between the half-English, half-Greek (cherchez l'êtrangère) Mrs. Zoe Gifford—mother of two sons, leader of fashion—and Everhard (sic!), a Catholic priest who has lost his faith. On the very night Everhard has decided that he loves Zoe and that, therefore, he must never see her again, there is a fire. The whole of Gifford Castle is aroused (so to speak). Knowing she would not leave unless her sons were safe, Everhard leads them out of the castle and returns for her. When he finds her and assures her her children are safe,

she gasped, and fell an insensible weight in his arms.

The surprise, the alarm, the possible danger, were forgotten, he only felt the warm, palpitating burden which lay upon his bosom; he was too much overpowered by sensations to move—they stupefied him—the intense enjoyment amounted to pain. He, who in his whole life had never touched a woman, now had a whole life of passion melted into that moment.

He crushed her into his arms with ferocious love,—he pressed burning kisses upon her face, her lips, and her bosom; but kisses were too weak to express the passion that was within him. It was madness like hatred,—beads of sweat stood thick on his forehead, and his breath came in gasps. (80)

He carries her to the chapel, where the altar light reveals her state. She comes to. The passion is not one-sided, but though Zoe too yields to its power, she is the first to recover. There is a large shawl nearby which allows her to hide her shame, and Everhard, trained in self-control, manages to master himself.

A light burned before the altar,—he bore her to the steps, and sprinkled her face and hands with water from a vessel that stood near. Zoe opened her eyes, and saw Everhard bending over her. The colour rushed over her face and neck. Everhard made an effort to turn away, but, almost unconsciously, he fell on his knees beside her; and the next moment, Zoe’s burning arms were round his neck, and her long hair fell like a veil over him. Everhard’s brain was in a whirl, and his veins ran fire, as he felt her warm breath upon him.

Zoe was the first to recover from the delirium of the moment; she struggled to disengage herself from his arms, and seizing a large shawl
which had fallen on the ground, attempted to cover herself with it, exclaiming,

"Oh, Everhard, what will you think of me? I have made you hate me—despise me. Forgive me for letting you betray yourself, it was the last thing you desired to do."

The sound of her voice in broken tones, recalled Everhard to his senses; the force of long years of the habit of self-control was not lost in this trying moment; with an effort almost superhuman he suffered Zoe to disengage herself, and retreated against a pillar at a little distance; he twisted his hands in each other, and stood crushing himself against the stone, whilst a spasm of sharp pain attested the energy of his efforts to master himself.

Zoe, meantime, lay crouched on the steps of the altar, she did not dare to raise her eyes towards Everhard. (80)

Kathleen Tillotson quotes from Jewsbury's letters to show how inflammatory this scene was considered at the time:

In 1845 Geraldine Jewsbury had to alter one scene of her first novel, Zoe, by arranging—in her own mocking words—"for a more liberal distribution of spotted muslin" [the "large shawl" in the passage?]... She cannot have supplied enough of it, since Zoe was "put into a dark cupboard in the Manchester Library of that day—because... [it was] calculated to injure the morals of the young men." (60-61)

The link between Brontë and Jewsbury may be seen in the Jerrold's review of The Half Sisters alluded to earlier, for it praises Jewsbury in terms that might readily, and even more appropriately, apply to Brontë: "[It is] in the infinite variety of illustration of the feelings and emotions that she is superior to all other female writers we have met with." The review defends "her war... with convention, as far as it stands in opposition to the development of natural powers and feelings" (Jerrold's 7 [1848]: 371).

Surely Charlotte Brontë was not poking about in the dark cupboards of the Manchester Library while attending her father during his eye operation in Manchester and while beginning Jane Eyre, just a year after Jewsbury's novel was published? Brontë's heroine, who is the rescuer rather than rescued, is decorous from the beginning: Jane...
hurriedly puts on a “frock and shawl” (185) before venturing out of her room. Her hero, however, has no such opportunity but does so as soon as he can. When the fire is out, Jane offers to bring a candle, but he warns her, “at your peril you fetch a candle yet: wait two minutes till I get into some dry garments” (184). The fire is doused before the lovers can become inflamed, and Rochester is off to the third story to find out what happened. He returns, but before he answers Jane’s questions he finds out what she knows and suspects, and he abruptly confirms that indeed it was, as Jane thought, Grace Poole. Few readers will have been convinced, though for most the scene in the bedroom is surely more absorbing than what might be going on up above, the mystery not having a ghost of a chance in the lurid glare of the dawn of sexual love.

That fire is not quite out. Rochester takes both Jane’s hands in his, saying he could have tolerated no one else but her to have been his “cherished preserver” (187). There is “strange fire in his look.” He will not let her go. Even Jane is beginning to suspect what the romantic reader has long been suspecting—that Rochester is strongly attracted to her. She extricates herself by (we assume) pretending to hear Mrs. Fairfax stirring.

Jane is less inflamed than the half-foreign Zoe, but her passion is no less real. Passion in these pages takes the form not of fire but of flood. Earlier in the chapter, Rochester has told her,

“You think all existence lapses in as quiet a flow as that in which your youth has hitherto slid away. Floating on with closed eyes and muffled ears, you neither see the rocks bristling not far off in the bed of the flood, nor hear the breakers boil at their base. But I tell you...you will come some day to a craggy pass of a channel, where the whole of life’s stream will be broken up into whirl and tumult, foam and noise; either you will be dashed to atoms on cragpoints, or lifted up and borne on by some master wave into a calmer current.” (174-75)

And now, when Rochester finally releases her, Jane retires to her bed, but not to rest. She is tossed about by passion, joy, hope—and doubt:

I regained my couch, but never thought of sleep. Till morning dawned I was tossed on a buoyant but unquiet sea, where billows of trouble rolled
under surges of joy. I thought sometimes I saw beyond its wild waters a shore, sweet as the hills of Beulah; and now and then a freshening gale, wakened by hope, bore my spirit triumphantly towards the bourne: but I could not reach it, even in fancy,—a counteracting breeze blew off the land, and continually drove me back. Sense would resist delirium: judgment would warn passion. Too feverish to rest, I rose as soon as day dawned. (187-88)

As the Clarendon edition explains (592-93), "Beulah" in Hebrew means "married." The editors cite Isaiah 62:4—"Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate"—and The Pilgrim's Progress, where the land of Beulah, lying beyond the shadow of death, is the scene where "the contract between the Bride and the Bridegroom will be renewed." So, after the fire, in Rochester's bed and in his eyes, comes the flood, over him and over his bed and over Jane's imagination. And Jane glimpses a joyous future in marriage, which, however, even in her imagination she could not as yet reach.

It is in this turbulent state that the first volume of Jane Eyre ends. Filling the foreground, despite the Gothic shadows that hover about the Hall, is the love story. The suspense, our expectations, center on the outcome of that story: will the freshening gale carry her toward marriage and bliss or will the offshore breeze keep her from that bourne? It is that question the reader must ask the text while putting down volume 1, reaching for and opening volume 2, and settling down for a good read.

This first major punctuated pause and the question mark compel a rapid mental review of the whole novel to this point. All the heteroglossic voices—the Godwinian, the Byronic, the Gothic; those of the foundling novel and the governess novel—now seem to be telling a dialogic love story. Because of the multiple refractions, the nature of that story and its outcome is in doubt: Is this the conventional romantic plot? Or is it to be the story of Godwinian or feminist rebellion precipitating the heroine into dire straits which she may or may not navigate successfully? Or is it a Gothic tale not only of mystery but

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of seduction? The voices are familiar but the cacophony is new; the old conventional parts in their very multiplicity have made an original and mystifying story, a new species of novel. Though not a "history of events," as Fonblanque would prefer, neither is Jane Eyre simply an analysis of a single mind.