Volume 1 ends with Jane rising from her sleepless bed at dawn, having tossed and turned with tantalizing visions of "Beulah." Volume 2 opens not long after. Jane goes downstairs that morning as tense and expectant of love as the reader is of a love story: "I both wished and feared to see Mr. Rochester" (191). Love, not fully or directly expressed, is foremost in her mind, and the love story foremost in the reader's. Both are teased by delay: Jane by events, the reader by the narrator's reticence. The house is abuzz with talk of the fire that Rochester is supposed to have quenched himself, but he is nowhere to be seen. Grace Poole, who, Rochester had confirmed, was the arsonist, is there, astonishingly cool. Jane wonders "why she had not been given into custody that morning; or at the very least dismissed from her master's service" (195). Jane's head and heart are filled with thoughts of love, so despite the contrary evidence of Grace's flat figure and coarse features, Jane can only make Grace part of a love story: perhaps when young, she was Rochester's mistress, and so now has a hold on him. . . .

The day passes—and so do several pages—and still no Rochester or word of him, until, at tea, Mrs. Fairfax mentions that Mr. Rochester has a fair night for his journey. He is off to the Eshtons, where among the house guests will be Miss Blanche Ingram. It is the first Jane and the reader have heard of her. Here is a much more likely and formidable rival than Grace or the faithless Céline; in the housekeeper's description, Blanche Ingram seems almost the beauty Jane had wished herself to be the night she arrived at Thornfield—"Tall, fine bust,
sloping shoulders; long, graceful neck; olive complexion, dark and clear; noble features; eyes rather like Mr. Rochester's: large and black and brilliant as her jewels" (199)—and as accomplished as she is beautiful.

The love story now settles into the typical triangle. Jane must contend with the lovely and accomplished Blanche if she is to win what she now knows she desires, Rochester's love. What chance does plain Jane have? She feels there is none. She is ashamed at her vanity in misinterpreting Rochester's feelings:

"It does good to no woman to be flattered by her superior, who cannot possibly intend to marry her; and it is madness in all women to let a secret love kindle within them, which, if unreturned and unknown, must devour the life that feeds it; and, if discovered and responded to, must lead, ignis fatuus-like into miry wilds whence there is no extrication." (201)

This is not merely Jane's personal, prudential code, but "occupied" territory; Margaret Russell, for example, in the fictional autobiography of 1846, has a similar experience and regret: "In an unguarded moment I had overstepped the native modesty of womanhood. . . . [I] loved—and without a return of love!" (68). In Harriet Martineau's Deerbrook, a governess novel of 1839, for a woman, unasked, to tell her love is "horrible and disgusting" (164). "A very important rule of behaviour [in popular fiction] was that a woman did not allow herself to love till she knew she was beloved. This was no doubt connected with the general belief in the spiritualized sexual organization of women, in contrast to the earthy passions of men" (Dalziel 97). This rule and its assumptions about female sexuality were not, however, universally accepted in the fiction of the period. We have already seen in Jewsbury that women's passions are acknowledged, even celebrated, in some contemporary fiction. Jewsbury, however, was notorious, and Zoe hidden from view at Mudie's, but even in Fatherless Fanny, the honorable Amelia proudly declares, "I was not as backward in declaring it [love], as some prudish things of my sex. I have no notion of women concealing their predilection till the last moment" ([Reeve] 441). The "consistency-building" reader (Iser 118–24) who has identified Jane with rebellion and feminism may find in this passage an "anticipatory caution"—Jane may be
less radical than thought—or the reader may notice that this passage is in quotation marks. The impression that Rochester was growing to love Jane has come through dramatized action (the fire, for example), Rochester's words, and through Jane's interpretation, which appeared to be double-voiced and therefore to have the tacit blessing of the older Jane. The passage decrying secret love, however, is in quotation marks, and so is "unauthorized," neither underwritten nor contradicted by the older narrator. The reader's comprehension is still further ambiguated by the contradictory alien voices of contemporary fiction regarding proper female conduct. The suspense thus involves not only the outcome of the love story but the nature of the moral world of Jane Eyre.

The punishment Jane sentences herself to undergo seems related less to her offense in loving than to her foolishness in hoping to win Rochester's love. She must draw a harshly realistic self-portrait in chalk—"Portrait of a Governess, disconnected, poor, and plain"—and paint on ivory the most beautiful face she can imagine, "Blanche, an accomplished lady of rank" (201). Strong and determined as Jane is, as morally dangerous as she knows her love must be, as hopeless as she fears it is, warned as she has been of the destructive power of love and jealousy by Rochester himself, she still cannot uproot her feelings for him. As soon as he returns, three weeks later, her love is rekindled: "I had not intended to love him: the reader knows I had wrought hard to extirpate from my soul the germs of love detected there; and now, at the first renewed view of him, they spontaneously revived, green and strong! He made me love him without looking at me" (218-19). Jane has lost control over her passions, her self, her destiny. No matter whether he is Schedoni or Byron; no matter whether the third story is inhabited by the ghost of his murdered brother or a besotted mistress; she must believe in him and love him. Whether a Godwinian or governess heroine, she is in danger. Suspense is doubled: Is Rochester hero or villain? Will Jane win his love or not, and which would be better?

The rival is no longer Grace Poole but the haughty, buxom, beautiful, well-born Blanche. Jane still thinks Rochester is of her own kind, not like Blanche or her family and friends, but she cannot explain his strange conduct since the night of the fire or deny that, no matter how carelessly, he is courting Blanche. In an ugly scene, in which both
Rochester and Blanche know that Jane can hear what is being said, Rochester seems to egg on Blanche and her mother to further humiliate Jane:

"You should hear mama on the subject of governesses; Mary and I have had, I should think, a dozen at least in our day; half of them detestable and the rest ridiculous, and all incubi—were they not, mama?"

"My dearest, don't mention governesses: the word makes me nervous. I have suffered a martyrdom from their incompetency and caprice: I thank heaven I have now done with them!"

Mrs. Dent here bent over the pious lady, and whispered something in her ear: I suppose from the answer elicited, it was a reminder that one of the anathematized race was present.

"Tant pis!" said her ladyship. "I hope it may do her good!" (221)

In only a slightly lowered voice, she claims that she can see "all the faults of her class." Rochester, apparently determined to prolong Jane's mortification, insists she go on. Then Blanche and her brother recall how they used to torment their governesses, spilling tea, throwing books, even "blackmailing" a Miss Wilson who seemed to have had the audacity to fall in love with the tutor. Amy Ashton also recalls how she and her sister used to "quiz" their governess, "but she was such a good creature, she would bear anything." "'I suppose now,' said Miss Ingram, curling her lip sarcastically, 'we shall have an abstract of all the memoirs of all the governesses extant'" (223).

In the governess novel of the day, such a scene is heavily occupied territory, the often-religious governess novel setting itself in moral and social opposition to the dominant fashionable, or silver-fork, novel. Mrs. Ryals, in Mrs. Hall's "The Governess, a Tale," for example, sounds as if she could join the Ingram party: "I will never again take a governess into my house to reside. . . . One was imprudent enough to wish to get married, and expected to come into the drawing-room when there was company of an evening. Another would have a bedroom to herself" (Hall 53).

The scene of social humiliation is a topos virtually constitutive of the genre, and it is through such scenes that Brontë's is refracted. In *Amy Herbert* (1844), for example, Emily Morton, the governess (whom we have seen attending the deathbed of a child), is thought of conde-
scendingly as "remarkably" ladylike, yet is at first taken for a lady's maid (Sewell 43). When the pious and naive Amy tells her young friends the Harringtons that it is only their mother and not themselves who can discharge the governess, she is told, "What a simpleton you are! . . . There are hundreds of ways of getting rid of a person you don't like" (62). Later, the Harrington children have a visitor even ruder than they, who, like Blanche and her mother, speak of the governness as if she were not present:

She [Emily] was not introduced to Miss Cunningham; . . . a whispered conversation followed between her [Miss Cunningham] and Margaret, quite loud enough to be heard. She was described as "the person who teaches us music and drawing," and her birth, parentage, and education were given. . . . all that showed she was aware of what was said was the momentary glistening of her eye as she caught the words—"Oh! she is an orphan, is she?" and then Margaret's reply—"Yes; she lost her father and mother both in one month." (103–4)

(Jane's parents too, we will recall, "died within a month of each other" [26]).

Mrs. Sherwood's Caroline Mordaunt is treated as an inferior by Lady Euphrasia and abused by other employers. She, like Jane and Emily Morton, hears herself being insulted by implication as if she were not present during the conversation: after she becomes a lady's companion, two spinsters visit her mistress every evening to play cards and "to abuse domestics and companions of every description—which they did with little reference to the only person present of these denominations" (296).

The Countess Blessington's Clara Mordaunt, in *The Governess*, is not only harassed by the West Indian Hercules Marsden, but, when her eldest pupil discovers that Clara is in fact an heiress, the child insensitively remarks,

"And so, Miss Mordaunt, you are a lady after all?" said Miss Williamson, looking at Clara, "Well, who'd have thought it; for though I told Betsey [the maid] that you were, it was only to vex her; I did not believe it. . . . This proves that mama is not always right, for she said that governesses were never ladies." (2:69–70)
In Mrs. Ross’s *The Governess; Or, Politics in Private Life*, the governess, Gertrude Walcot, is a lady by birth, but her mistress’s mother, the Dowager Lady Lyster, claims, “There is nothing so intolerable as a well-born, and what people call a lady-like governess; a sort of schoolroom princess, who will do literally nothing she is desired to do” (Ross 79). In the same novel, Lady Hanway says, “the fact of her being a lady by birth [has nothing] to do with the matter:—she is a governess now, and as such her proper place is in the school-room. Do you know . . . the other morning . . . Mrs. Elphinstone came in, and she actually introduced her to us? Lady Lucy, I believe, did bow;—I took not the slightest notice” (78-79). Dr. Jameson, clearly speaking for the author in this didactic novel, protests against treating “a lady equal in birth to any one of us” as a “species of upper nursemaid” and advocates admitting the governess into the society of guests—to relieve her solitude, to keep her practiced in elegant society, and to show respect to her so that the children will respect her (166-67).

Mr. Johnson, in “Our Governess,” however, resents the lengthy tradition of favorable (and therefore “unrealistic”) treatment of governesses in literature: “Their woes have found imaginative record in novels and sentimental comedies for more than a century. In these productions they are invariably portrayed as females of high mental endowments, abandoned by the caprices of fortune to the indignities of vulgar mistresses and the tricks of wicked children” (Hall 79).

The scenic topos of the social humiliation of the governess does, indeed, go back, if not a century, at least as far as Jane Austen. The vulgar Mrs. Elton in *Emma* (1816), knowing that Emma’s friend had been her governess, upon meeting her says she’s “astonished to find her so lady-like! But she is really quite a gentlewoman” (250). The scene of Jane’s humiliation is thus familiar in novels of a certain kind and carries with it the aura of the domestic and, more specifically, the governess novel.

Blanche sees herself and her apparently doting suitor acting out narratives of a kind quite different from those of governess novels, however. She would have him play both the singer-secretary-lover Rizzio and the “wild, fierce, bandit-hero” Bothwell to her Mary, Queen of Scots (224); she professes to “doat on Corsairs” (225); she thinks “an English hero of the road would be the next best thing to an Italian ban-
dit; and that could only be surpassed by a Levantine pirate" (230). She professes a preference, in actuality as in fiction, for men of strength over those who possess "mere" beauty: "I grant an ugly woman is a blot on the fair face of creation; but as to the gentlemen, let them be solicitous to possess only strength and valour" (224).

Fiction, at least the kind of fiction Blanche prefers, is unrelated to reality. (When Frederika Bremer's heroine is advised not to judge the new neighbor, Bruno, by conventional standards because "deep passionate, Byronic natures require their own measure," she knows that such "knowledge of the age" is drawn "only from novels" [67].) Blanche reads novels passively, not to improve herself or to learn, but to pass the time: with a "haughty listlessness . . . [she] prepared to beguile, by the spell of fiction, the tedious hours" (236). Though she repeats "sounding phrases from books" and advocates "a high tone of sentiment," she herself is incapable of real sentiment (232). Blanche's preference for romantic, "culinary" (Jauss 19) fiction—the Byronic, the sentimental—is a moral measure of her falseness; she fictionalizes her reality. Her advocacy thus devalues the Byronic and romantic and thereby indirectly valorizes realistic, domestic, narrative, perhaps even governess novels.

Rochester, like Jane and the reader, seems to recognize Blanche's unworthiness. Jane sees that Blanche cannot charm him, does not know how to handle him, cannot love him, but she does not doubt that, after the custom of their class, they will marry anyway (231–32). Rochester is thus dissociated from the Byronic hero that Blanche would have him be, or would have him think she thought him to be. But with his dissolute past and with a look in his eye that may be "sinister or sorrowful," a look that suggests volcanoes and earthquakes and makes Jane not fearful but desiring "to dare—to divine it" (234–35), he does not sound like the hero of a governess novel.

There is, though, another sinful Edward, Edward Seymour in Rachel McCrindell's The English Governess. Once "the brother" of Clara Neville's "heart, the future partner of her life . . . with whom she might hope to spend, not only a life of holiness and usefulness on earth, but an eternity of bliss in the regions of never ending joy and praise" (30), he falls into bad company at Cambridge and becomes dissipated and
irreligious. Clara breaks her engagement. Jane would be well-advised, perhaps, to drive thoughts of loving Rochester out of her mind, if he proves himself unreformed. Seymour is reported to have been killed in a steeplechase accident caused by his own recklessness. Later, with Clara’s fortunes at a low ebb, while she attends her dying little nephew, Edward reappears. He is not merely alive but reborn: he has found God, resigned his army commission, and become a minister. . . . The Reverend Mr. Edward Rochester, then? Not likely, perhaps. But the pattern of a rake rejected, and by rejection and reversal reformed, is plausible—for a governess novel.

There is, however, the impediment of Blanche. While Rochester is in Millcote on business, a Mr. Mason from the West Indies arrives. Jane finds him weak-looking, sleek-looking, like a gander, and meek, like a sheep—altogether different from the falconlike Rochester. But Louisa Eshton and Mary Ingram “both called him ‘a beautiful man.’ Louisa said he was ‘a love of a creature,’ and she ‘adored him;’” and Mary instanced his ‘pretty little mouth, and nice nose,’ as her ideal of charming” (238). There is no word from Blanche. He does not suit her professed preference for a highwayman or pirate, but we know there is a discrepancy between what she says and what she truly feels. Those readers trying to project some honorable and credible escape for Rochester from what seems an inevitable but catastrophic marriage may find some hope in Mason: Blanche might throw over Rochester for his friend.

The contemporary reader had even more reason to hope for the man from the West Indies, for the romantic creole is occupied territory. At one point in Fatherless Fanny everyone is talking about “the interesting creole” ([Reeve] 179) newly arrived from Jamaica, but he turns out to be not Fanny’s lover but her long-lost father. More often, the creole is either romantically attractive—both the Countess Blessington and Maria Edgeworth are “addicted” to “handsome creoles” (West 40)—or sexually threatening: the West Indian Hercules Marsden in the Countess Blessington’s 1839 novel The Governess was, we remember, “characteristically” hot-blooded, and Oliver Twist’s half brother Monks, whose mother responded to her unhappy marriage
and separation by indulging in “continental frivolities” (333), settles on his own estate in the West Indies “to escape the consequences of vicious courses here” (335).

The possibility that Mason will take Blanche off Rochester’s hands and the generic relation of Jane Eyre to the governess novel are reinforced by the appearance of an old hag, a gypsy fortune-teller, who does not seem to have told Blanche “anything to her advantage; and it seemed to me,” Jane tells us, “from her prolonged fit of gloom and taciturnity, that she herself, notwithstanding her professed indifference, attached undue importance to whatever revelations had been made her” (242–43). When the others have finished, the gypsy insists that Jane, too, have her fortune told. The gypsy reinforces the possibility of Mason becoming a successful rival of Rochester’s for Blanche: “I would advise her black-aviced suitor to look out: if another comes, with a longer or clearer rent-roll,—he’s dished” (251). The scene is an echo of a scene from the classical progenitor of the governess novel, Pamela:

One of the servants who wishes Pamela well and cannot get access to her, disguises himself as a gipsy, and, pretending to tell fortunes, brings her a letter warning her about the mock-marriage. In Jane Eyre Rochester disguises himself as a gipsy and, pretending to tell Jane’s fortune, hints at the truth of his position. One tiny point is significant of the method. In Pamela the gipsy wishes to draw Pamela’s attention to the fact that she is going to hide the letter in the grass, since she dare not give it to her then. She does it thus: “O! said she, I cannot tell your fortune: your hand is so white and fine, I cannot see the lines: but said she, and stooping, pulled up a little tuft of grass, I have a way for that: and so rubbed my hand with the mould part of the tuft: Now, said she, I can see the lines.”

In Jane Eyre Rochester disguised as a gipsy asks for Jane’s hand, and then says, “It is too fine . . . I can make nothing of such a hand as that; almost without lines; besides what is in a palm? Destiny is not written there.” (Spens 56–57)

When Jane discovers that the gypsy is Rochester, she is only half-surprised. She sensed from the beginning that this was no ordinary fortune-teller: “I had noted her feigned voice, her anxiety to conceal
her features. But my mind had been running on Grace Poole—that living enigma, that mystery of mysteries, as I considered her: I had never thought of Mr. Rochester” (254).

It is unlikely that many readers, despite their familiarity with and sympathy for Jane, would have thought of Grace Poole. With the mention of Grace here, however, the deserted wing motif and the Gothic are recalled, and they are reinforced by Rochester’s reaction to the news that a Mr. Mason has appeared at Thornfield:

As I spoke, he gave my wrist a convulsive grip; the smile on his lips froze: apparently a spasm caught his breath.

“Mason!—the West Indies!” he said, in the tone one might fancy a speaking automaton to enounce its single words; “Mason!—the West Indies!” he reiterated; and he went over the syllables three times, growing, in the intervals of speaking, whiter than ashes: he hardly seemed to know what he was doing. (255)

He sends Jane to fetch wine and report on Mason and the company. Rochester cannot believe all is normal: “They don’t look grave and mysterious, as if they had heard something strange?” (256). No. “If all these people came in a body and spat at me, what would you do, Jane?” Rochester asks. This stranger, then, knows something mysterious or secret that would turn society against Rochester. The neighbor in Frederika Bremer’s The Neighbours (translated by Mary Howitt in 1842 and again in 1844 by E. A. Friedlaender), himself a rather Byronic figure, is rumored to have “inherited ... the property of an uncle in the West Indies” (55). The truth is, however, that he had actually earned his wealth there—in the slave trade. Is this the secret Mason knows and with which he threatens Rochester? Was this what Rochester’s father and brother had forced upon him so that he might make sufficient money in the West Indies in order to preserve the whole Rochester estate for Rowland? (See Boumelha 62; and below, ch. 7.) Or is the secret more related to Grace Poole, the deserted wing, and the Gothic?

That very night, “in the dead of night,” Jane is awakened by the full moon shining through her uncurtained window. As she reaches to draw the curtain, a savage shriek paralyzes her. Rochester soon comes for her and leads her upstairs, where behind some tapestry is the door
to a room she had not known existed. "I heard thence a snarling, snatching sound, almost like a dog quarrelling" (262). Rochester tells her to wait, enters the room, and Jane hears "Grace Poole's own goblin ha! ha!" He bids Jane enter. She can still see only part of the room, but there is Mason, one sleeve and the side of his shirt "almost soaked in blood." Forbidding them to talk to each other, Rochester leaves Jane with the wounded man.

Then my own thoughts worried me. What crime was this, that lived incarnate in this sequestered mansion, and could neither be expelled nor subdued by the owner?—What mystery, that broke out, now in fire and now in blood, at the deadest hours of night?—What creature was it, that, masked in an ordinary woman's face and shape, uttered the voice, now of a mocking demon, and anon of a carrion-seeking bird of prey? (264)

The scene is somewhat reminiscent of that in the red-room, but here Jane articulates her own and the reader's questions, summarizes, recapitulates (reminding us of the fire, for example), and does not, as she did in the red-room, speak in the voice of the narrator. Indeed, though these thoughts are not in quotation marks, they are not double-voiced and are marked by the interrogatives as indirect discourse, specifically and monologically Jane's. Jane, like the reader, is unsure what is going on and what is to happen next.

Both Mason and Rochester are solicitous for the creature's welfare. Before he leaves, Mason says, "'Let her be taken care of; let her be treated as tenderly as may be: let her—' he stopped and burst into tears" (270). Rochester agrees to do so. Mason's care for a creature who has attacked him and, as he told Rochester, "sucked the blood: she said she'd drain my heart" (267) is puzzling. The creature must be a loved one, or a victim, or not responsible for her actions, or all three. Still, she is dangerous. Rochester assures Jane that he would not have left Jane alone without securely locking the door between her and the "wolf's den" (271).

A full moon; violent incidents that occur only in the dead of night; a creature that has a woman's form, but snarls like a dog or wolf, sucks blood, and vows to drain her victim's heart! More than a hint of vampirism is in the air. Not only were vampires sometimes found in the
shape of wolves, before Bram Stoker "stabilized" their nonhuman form as that of the bat, but here the sometimes-woman’s voice is somewhat like that of "a carrion-seeking bird of prey," suggestive of, if not a biologically accurate description of, a bat.

Vampirism is a favorite subject early in the nineteenth century, and not merely as fantasy. In April 1847, while *Jane Eyre* was being written, the second in a series of articles called "Letters on the Truths Contained in Popular Superstitions" appeared in *Blackwood’s*. The article, entitled "Vampirism," defined a vampire as "a dead body, which continues to live in the grave, which it leaves, however, by night, for the purpose of sucking the blood of the living, whereby it is nourished, and preserved in good condition" (61:432). The article reports authenticated testimony of epidemics of vampirism, exhumed bodies with blood in chest cavities, corpses with signs of life. It makes no reference to the vampire taking the form of bats, wolves, or dogs, but does refer to walking at night, stakes through the heart, and victims themselves turning into vampires—all part of the literary vampire repertoire.

Vampirism is very much part of the literary scene. The month before *Jane Eyre* appeared, the preface of *Varney, the Vampyre: or, The Feast of Blood* expresses gratitude for "the unprecedented success of the romance of ‘Varney the Vampire’" and for its favorable reception by "the whole Metropolitan Press."³ Louis James calls *Varney* "probably the best known of these [popular late-Gothic] penny-issue novels after *Sweeney Todd*" (99). Any allusion to the vampire in 1847 would surely recall that novel or its reputation. (And an added frisson may visit those readers of *Jane Eyre* who had read *Varney* in this edition, for the vampire leaves a manuscript which describes his earlier adventures with Charles II and ... Rochester!) Mario Praz suggests that the first literary use made of the vampire legend was in Goethe’s *Braut von Korinth* (1797), and that such tales were henceforth associated with Germany. In 1816 Byron read German ghost stories to a group of friends—the Shelleys, Dr. Polidori, Monk Lewis—and challenged them to write one themselves. One result was *Frankenstein*; another was *The Vampyre*, which was Polidori’s elaboration of Byron’s own *A Fragment* (1819) conflated with elements from Lady Caroline Lamb’s *Glenarvon* (1816), in which Byron himself figured as the fatal lover, Ruthven Glenarvon.
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The Vampyre, reprinted in 1840 in the cheap and popular Romancist and Novelist's Library (James 99), was originally published in the New Monthly Magazine as Byron's. Praz claims that it was Byron who was chiefly "responsible" for the vampire fashion, and that the vampire is connected with the Byronic hero or Fatal Man (Praz 76-78). For many readers, then, Rochester's aura of Byronism would appear in a more sinister light, and the line between the Byronic and the Gothic would be erased. If Grace is a vampire, the projected configuration of Jane Eyre is radically changed. Goethe's female vampire says, "I am urged forth from the grave to seek the joy which was snatched from me, to love again the man I once lost and to suck his heart's blood. When he is ruined, I must pass on to others, and young men shall succumb to my fury" (qtd. in Praz 209). Polidori summarizes in his introduction another version of vampirism:

In many parts of Greece it is considered as a sort of punishment after death, for some heinous crime committed whilst in existence, that the deceased is not only doomed to vampyrise, but compelled to confine his infernal visitations solely to those beings he loved most while upon earth—those to whom he was bound by ties of kindred and affection. (xxii)

Vampirism is in the novel more or less over the head of the young Jane and is there at the suggestion of the narrator or author herself. The reader, then, through this rubric sees young Jane and her perspective as other, and has questions that Jane at the time does not have. Was Mason, then, the lover Grace lost, as Goethe would have it, or is Grace forced to prey on Mason, her relative or one she loves, as punishment for some heinous crime she committed upon earth? What is Rochester's role? What is the creature or Grace Poole to him? Why is such a creature, one who tried to burn him in his bed, kept on at Thornfield (a question Jane asks herself)? Will he, though no longer a young gentleman, be Grace's next victim? Or was he, as Jane conjectured, once her lover? Or is he related to her? Is old kinship or affection the reason both men are so solicitous for the well-being of a creature so foul? Will Rochester soon be "vampyrised"? Or has he been already?

As was the case after the fire, after—and despite—this harrowing attack, the love story once more moves to the fore and partially
CHAPTER 5

eclipses the Gothic. Rochester tries to get Jane to agree that if one needs another in order to reform and live a better life, he would be "justified in overleaping an obstacle of custom," a custom he does not believe in anyway. Jane does not know how to answer and silently asks "for some good spirit to suggest a judicious and satisfactory response." A judicious response comes: "'Sir,' I answered, 'a Wanderer's repose or a Sinner's reformation should never depend on a fellow-creature. . . . let him look higher than his equals for strength to amend, and solace to heal'" (274). It is a response that does indeed sound as if it is in quotation marks, that of a spirit other than Jane's; it strongly resembles Helen Burns's admonition that Jane thought too much of the love of human beings: God "has provided you with other resources than your feeble self, or than creatures feeble as you," Helen had told her (81). The spirit world, with vampire and guardian angels, seems circumambient.

Rochester meanwhile seems on the verge once more of professing his love for Jane, but he suddenly turns the conversation to Blanche and his impending marriage. This strange vacillation, with the vacillation of the narrative itself from love story to Gothic and seemingly back to love story, with the consequent ambiguating of Rochester's character and intentions, overdetermines expectation: there are too many possibilities, too many generic signals, too many possible ontological grounds.

Matters are not helped any by what seems like an arbitrary interruption and another ontological complication, though the spirit world is made even more, and more variegatedly, present. Jane is called away to the deathbed of her Aunt Reed, but she has been "warned" beforehand:

Presentiments are strange things! and so are sympathies; and so are signs: and the three combined make one mystery to which humanity has not yet found the key. I never laughed at presentiments in my life; because I have had strange ones of my own. Sympathies I believe exist . . . whose workings baffle mortal comprehension. And signs, for aught we know, may be but the sympathies of Nature with man. (276)

We have already been made uncertain whether ghosts or vampires are native to this land; now we have another kind of supernatural
or at least extraordinary aspect of reality to deal with. The present tense suggests that this is the monologic voice of the narrator, part of the "official" worldview, the reality of the novel. Though the passage is not fully double-voiced ("I never laughed at presentiments in my life"), what follows suggests that the narrator speaks for if not through young Jane: Jane has been dreaming of a child for a week, a sign, Bessie used to say, of trouble to oneself or one's kin; and, sure enough, Jane is called away to her aunt's deathbed. The ten-year-old Jane could be afraid that her uncle's ghost might appear; she could be flip about Scripture and uncertain what or where God is, and even less certain about heaven (96) and the spirit world. Eighteen-year-old Jane seemed easily convinced that the source of the demonic laugh was Grace Poole, yet she is able to say to Rochester that "The human and fallible should not arrogate a power with which the divine and perfect alone can be safely entrusted" (169). Presentiments, sympathies, and signs widen the field of Jane's trust in the more-than-phenomenal. The novel or narrator here endorses Jane's view but does not always do so. On the one hand, there may be ghosts and vampires—surely there's more to the third story than the mundane Grace—and it is likely that Helen's affirmation of God, heaven, and even a world of spirits will prove "true." The novel seems to be constructing an ontological force field with skepticism, superstition, and traditional Christianity as its vectors. At this point in the text, the nature of the world of the novel is as great a mystery as are the upper reaches of Thornfield Manor, the nature of Rochester, and the outcome of Jane's autobiography.

If Jane's dreams or presentiments make us search our memories of what has gone before for the proper ontological ground of the fictional world, Jane's physical return to Gateshead "spatializes" the text, making us think back over the fictional past, just as it makes Jane think back over her own past. Bessie and the breakfast room carry Jane and the reader backward toward the very first pages of the novel:

There was every article of furniture looking just as it did on the morning I was first introduced to Mr. Brocklehurst: the very rug he had stood upon still covered the hearth. Glancing at the bookcases, I thought I could distinguish the two volumes of Bewick's British Birds occupying their old place on the third shelf, and Gulliver's Travels and the Arabian Nights.
ranged just above. The inanimate objects were not changed: but the living things had altered past recognition. (285–86)

The child Eliza has changed into a woman with a sallow and severe face; her intention, once her mother dies, is to enter a convent. She is a familiar figure in the fiction of the time (Clarendon 597). Eliza’s sister, Georgiana, is out of, indeed the “author” of, a novel of another sort: in an afternoon and evening of confidential conversation with Jane, “a volume of a novel of fashionable life was that day improvised by her for my benefit” (293). Nor are the Catholic and the fashionable novel the only kinds foregrounded here. John Reed, the terror of Jane’s childhood, we learn, has ruined himself and virtually ruined the family through gambling and has committed suicide. It was that which caused Mrs. Reed’s apoplectic seizure. His life story could come out of almost any moral tale of the period. At Gateshead we seem virtually to be at Mudie’s.

*Jane Eyre* is at this time defining itself as a religious or metaphysical novel, but as yet we are not quite certain of what sort. The religious nature of the episode is chiefly embodied in the two brief interviews Jane has with the dying Mrs. Reed (the unrepentant sinner’s deathbed, like the child’s, is a familiar scene in Victorian fiction):

> It is a happy thing that time quells the longings of vengeance, and hushes the promptings of rage and aversion: I had left this woman in bitterness and hate, and I came back to her now with no other emotion than a sort of ruth for her great sufferings, and a strong yearning to forget and forgive all injuries—to be reconciled, and clasp hands in amity. . . .

> I had once vowed that I would never call her aunt again: I thought it no sin to forget and break that vow, now. (288–89)

In the second interview she ponders the mystery of death and immortality and recalls Helen:

> “One lies there,” I thought, “who will soon be beyond the war of earthly elements. Whither will that spirit—now struggling to quit its material tenement—flit when at length released?”

> In pondering the great mystery, I thought of Helen Burns: recalled
her dying words—her faith—her doctrine of the equality of disembodied souls. (297–98)

Jane now has a third voice. Her present, Thornfield voice has been “gradually and slowly wrought out of others’ words that have been acknowledged and assimilated, and the boundaries between the two are at first scarcely perceptible” (Bakhtin, Dialogic 345n). The rebellious young Jane vowed not to call Mrs. Reed aunt; the words of Helen, perhaps of Miss Temple, and even her own response to the negative example of Rochester have made her change her mind and not regret having done so. This young woman is closer to the mature woman narrator than to the child Jane; if the anticipatory cautions of the early chapters have not been enough, now we ought to recognize that the young Jane, though she has an ineradicable voice in the world of the novel, does not always speak for the narrator, for the novel as a whole, but is in dialogue with the narrator. We are prepared to distance ourselves somewhat from Jane, to see or hear her change, to comprehend her narration while remaining alert to its double- or triple-voicedness. Those still in love with the rebellious, self-reliant child who confronted her elders may ignore or deplore the recantation, but to do so is to impose a monologic reading on a dialogic text. To silence that rebellious child entirely, however, is equally monologic. Jane at Thornfield has assimilated the voices of Helen and Miss Temple to her own earlier voice; the earlier Jane is still there, if now, even without the older narrator, hybridized. Jane has grown socially, psychologically, and morally, and is perhaps less uncertain about religious matters. As “authorial audience” the reader must keep pace, must qualify the positive primacy effect of the self-reliant, rebellious, secular Jane. Not all readers do.

Meanwhile the plot has not been standing still during this digression, this dialogic and ontological reconfiguration. Jane has been called to her aunt’s bedside to be given at last a letter that Mrs. Reed had received three years earlier from Jane’s uncle in Madeira. It reads:

“Madam,

“Will you have the goodness to send me the address of my niece, Jane Eyre, and tell me how she is: it is my intention to write shortly and
desire her to come to me at Madeira. Providence has blessed my endeavours to secure a competency; and as I am unmarried and childless, I wish to adopt her during my life, and bequeath her at my death whatever I may have to leave."

"I am, Madam, &c. &c.
"JOHN EYRE, Madeira." (299)

Mrs. Reed, out of hatred and spite, had written John Eyre to say that Jane had died. She is now contrite and wishes to right the wrong before she dies. We have heard of Uncle John once before. When Jane was leaving Lowood for Thornfield, she met Bessie, who told her that some seven years earlier her father’s brother had come seeking her at Gateshead but had to leave for Madeira before he could follow her to Lowood. Now there is the possibility of a bequest, and the plot topos the *Spectator* complained about—the “convenient but not very novel resource of an unknown uncle dying abroad [which] makes her independent” (Allott 75)—is in place.

Since Jane is now returning to Thornfield and Rochester, Uncle John is abruptly shoved into the background. She finds Rochester, sitting on a stile. Stile-sitters sometimes are ghosts (see above, ch. 3). Rochester is not, but he finds Jane somewhat amusingly ghostlike: "just one of your tricks: ... to steal into the vicinage of your home along with twilight, just as if you were a dream or a shade" (306). He asks her where she’s been for a month.

"I have been with my aunt, sir, who is dead."
"A true Janian reply! Good angels be my guard! She comes from the other world—from the abode of people who are dead; and tells me so when she meets me alone here in the gloaming!" (306–7)

With our renewed uncertainty about Rochester’s character, his intentions, and his very nature, and with flutterings of vampirism at Thornfield, talk of the living dead is not a thoroughly funny or irrelevant joke.

But, it is summer; Rochester, like the weather, is all smiles; he does not visit Blanche. "Never had he called me more frequently to his presence; never been kinder to me when there—and alas! never had I loved him so well" (310). The chapter ends, and though all is
sunshine and jocularity, that "alas!" and a thin veil of Gothic ever-so­slightly blur the happy rays, recalling the mysterious shadow of the upper reaches of Thornfield.

The days grow even sunnier, and one soft evening Rochester meets her in the garden. He plays upon her feelings mercilessly—teasing her about his upcoming marriage, his having found her a place as governess in Ireland—until she abandons her maidenly reserve and confesses her love. Only then does he tell her he is breaking off his match with Blanche. He proposes, Jane accepts and he begins to murmur about God sanctioning what he is about to do, and to hell with men's opinions.

"But what had befallen the night? . . . what ailed the chestnut tree? it writhed and groaned; while wind roared in the laurel walk, and came sweeping over us" (322). The interrogatives serve once again to put the passage "in quotation marks," distanced from the narrator who, from her position in the future, could, but at this point chooses not to, answer the questions. The reader is somewhat distanced from young Jane by the unanswered questions and looks over her head toward the future with more uncertainty than Jane exhibits. There is a fierce storm in the night, thunder and lightning. Jane is not afraid, but the reader may not be so indifferent: more than love is in the fictional foreground now, a kind of uneasy apprehension encircled by the whole repertoire of Gothic and other dire possibilities. The chapter ends ominously, all the more ominous since Jane seems so unaware.

"Before I left my bed in the morning, little Adèle came running in to tell me that the great horse-chestnut at the bottom of the orchard had been struck by lightning in the night, and half of it split away" (323). They had been sitting beneath that tree when Rochester proposed, but there is no record of Jane's response to the news of the storm's destruction, despite her assimilation of at least some of Helen's awareness of a spirit world. Has human love, which Helen had warned her she made too central to her life, silenced Helen's voice? The mature narrator is still silent. Is this bolt from the blue just a bit of Victorian melodrama? stage business? heavy-handed symbolism? pathetic fallacy (passion = storm)? Clearly there must be trouble brewing, but what is the aesthetic or metaphysical signal here? The dramatic, almost theatrical
placing of the news about the lightning-struck tree reveals the hand of the author/narrator, the last words of the chapter functioning as a sign without words, insisting that readers distance themselves somewhat from Jane and give to the event more thought than Jane does. It must signify in the configuration of the narrative. But how?

The significance of the event is refracted by analogues in the literary context. Lightning does not strike aimlessly in mid-nineteenth-century fiction. In Anne Marsh’s *The Deformed* (1834, reissued 1844), the villainous Marchioness arranges the murder of the hunchback-hero to make way for her son, Lord Louis. Eighteen months later, she is celebrating Louis’s coming of age, unrightful heir now to title and fortune, when the sky darkens and thunder is heard in the distance.

One ray of sun shot between the dark clouds, and illuminated his face. The next moment—a crash of thunder—loud—terrible—rattled through the sky, and one bright flash penetrated, for a second, the horrible gloom. One flash—and a cry, a universal cry, rent the air—Lord Louis! Lord Louis! Lord Louis!—the thunder-bolt had fallen—and struck him dead at his mother’s feet. (130)

The stricken Marchioness sees in the bolt the hand of God, and the author leaves no doubt that it is Providence that governs fate; she prefaces her short novel with an epigraph from Lamartine:

Un Dieu descend toujours pour dénouer le drame,
Toujours la Providence y veille et nous proclame
Cette justice occulte, et ce divin ressort
Qui fait jouer le temps, et gouverne le sort.

Less spectacular but perhaps more germane is the oak tree that has been shattered by lightning in George Sand’s *Consuelo* (1842, tr. 1847) which is described as “a supernatural omen of revenge” (Desner 97).

The early Victorian novel-reader, recalling these or similar fictional topoi, may suspect that there is a supernatural agency behind this event which Jane now dismisses so casually but which the narrator places so emphatically at the end of the chapter. At least for the time being, however, that suspicion is not reinforced, so it remains only one of many possible explanations. The narrator has been silent, not just here, but throughout these episodes—the attack on Mason, Jane’s visit
to her aunt, her return, the happy aftermath. That she could intervene at any moment and reveal what or who inhabits the upper story, is of course true, and part of the reticence can be attributed to the need for mystery and suspense. But there is a related, more significant reason. It is in these suspenseful pages that the nature of reality in the fictional world of *Jane Eyre* is most problematic—at least to this point. The ontological as well as the narrative suspense is here at its height. The strong suggestions of the Gothic, of vampirism, are followed by a double-voiced paragraph on presentiments, sympathies, and signs. That paragraph in turn is followed by the conventional deathbed scene of the sinner, Mrs. Reed, with Jane acting on the religious principles of Helen, invoking memories of Helen and her beliefs in the spirit world. The fairy world—and even the Gothic "return from the dead"—are treated lightly and all but melt in the sunshine of Rochester's love and proposal of marriage. Is there a spirit world interpolated in the sublunar? If so, is this world that of Gothic supernaturalism? that of fairy tales? that of traditional Judeo-Christian religion? or a combination of all of them? And what of presentiments, sympathies, signs, and dreams? Are signs—as Jane (the younger? the elder? both?) say(s)—"but the sympathies of Nature with man" (276)? How then to read the significance of the lightning-struck tree?

The generic signals do not answer those questions but simply reinforce their multiplicity. They offer the ontological possibilities of the worlds of the Gothic, of domestic realism (governess novels), of romance (love stories), of religious fiction. Are there vampires in this world? Is there a heaven? The narrator could say for sure who or what is up above—in heaven or the third story. The reader, unaided, however, must scan the horizon of possibilities. Suspense and significance are intensified by the search.

Such heavy thoughts are all but suspended during the lengthy days—and pages—spent preparing, materially and emotionally, for the wedding, and the "return" of Jane's earliest voice without the assimilated, dark spiritual tones of Helen almost lays to rest our fears. There is only the most oblique warning, in the shape of an "occupied" or alien space, perhaps a literary allusion. Just as Lovelace wants Clarissa to go up to London for a few days to buy clothes at his
expense, Rochester wants to shower Jane with jewelry and rich clothes; but just as Clarissa says "[she] was not prepared to wear his livery yet" (Letter 123, 456), Jane, knowing her own limited claims to physical beauty, and refusing to be under obligation or to assume the role of a possession, resists. She refuses the compliment that she is preferable to "the grand Turk's whole seraglio": "I'll not stand you an inch in the stead of a seraglio,' I said; 'so don't consider me an equivalent for one: if you have a fancy for anything in that line, away with you, sir, to the bazaars of Stamboul without delay'" (339). We approve of Jane's independence and morality, but what does the echo of Clarissa portend?

Still, but less ominously, the Richardsonian heroine, Jane heeds Mrs. Fairfax's prudent—perhaps even prurient—advice to "keep Mr. Rochester at a distance: distrust yourself as well as him. Gentlemen in his station are not accustomed to marry their governesses" (334). Jane keeps him at bay with the "needle of repartee" (344). Though perhaps not wholly admirable to modern conceptions of frank and free behavior, Jane's prudence is consistent with her strong sense of independence, and her repartee is indeed delightful. It is also prudent in terms of Victorian mores and especially their representation in fiction. If no Hays or Jewsbury, Brontë somewhat more openly acknowledges sexuality than was the custom, and Jane is not quite so coy as the popular heroine, but she still keeps the distance thought proper, at least by Victorian popular novels:

a declaration once made and an engagement entered upon, it [courtship] is still dealt with [in popular fiction] in [an] abstract and etherealized manner. No hint is given of the complexity of sexual love and the force of physical passion. . . . "They were affianced," says Mrs Yorick Smythies in A Warning to Wives [a novel of 1847, published by Newby, who was sitting on the novels of Anne and Emily Brontë all during that year], "and to Inez's delicate nature, that circumstance, instead of increasing her liberty of action, added to her coy and maidenly reserve." (Dalziel 111)

Jane's wit is largely based on what seems an essentially healthy self-regard, a refusal to submit her selfhood to sentimental notions of self-sacrifice—in the name of love or anything else. When Rochester sings "a sweet air . . . in mellow tones" (342), she seizes on a melodra-
matic passage in the final stanza—"My love has sworn . . . / With me to live—to die" (343)—to defend herself against his amorous advances: "Soft scene, daring demonstration, I would not have;—I whetted my tongue: as he reached me, I asked with asperity, 'whom he was going to marry now? . . . What did he mean by such a pagan idea? I had no intention of dying with him'" (343–44). In our delight in her deflating retort we are likely, with Jane, to ignore the more ominous and significant passages in his song. He sings, for example,

... Might and Right, and Woe and Wrath,
           Between our spirits stood.
I dangers dared; I hindrance scorned;
           I omens did defy...

and, ominously,

I care not in this moment sweet,
           Though all I have rushed o'er
Should come on pinion, strong and fleet,
           Proclaiming vengeance sore:

Though haughty Hate should strike me down,
           Right, bar approach to me. (342–43)

If the song and Rochester's view of their relationship are taken seriously, something must be seriously wrong: Right stands between them; Rochester defies omens (Jane, remember, has always believed in signs and presentiments) and avenging Nemesis. It may be clever and in character for Jane to seize not on these intentional elements in the song but on the romantic hyperbole that offends her self-regard. The reader's uncertainty about the nature of the fictional world, however, calls attention to those darker details over Jane's head. Various voices, genres, ontologies—vampirism and superstition, Helen's spirit world and certainty of the soul's immortality, love and its sanctioned joys, lightning bolts and Providence—dialogically complicate our projections and configurations of the novel and its world.

Yet this is a happy, romantic interlude, with few disturbances and with bright possibilities. Jane, chafing under Rochester's largesse and the knowledge that she brings no fortune into this marriage, writes
her uncle John in Madeira to tell him she is alive and about to be married. But at a point of strong narrative emphasis, the end of chapter 9 of volume 2 (chapter 24)—which, the manuscript reveals, was once intended as the end of the volume—the narrator's voice is at last heard, cautionary, almost ominous; she accuses her younger self of hubris:

My future husband was becoming to me my whole world; and, more than the world: almost my hope of heaven. He stood between me and every thought of religion, as an eclipse intervenes between man and the broad sun. I could not, in those days, see God for his creature: of whom I had made an idol. (346)

To this would have been added a final sentence to end the volume: "The name Edward Fairfax Rochester was then my Alpha and Omega of existence" (Clarendon 346n)—a sentence that would have compounded the idolatry with blasphemy, clothing Rochester with God's own identity. (See Revelations 1:8—"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord.")

This authorized warning also has reinforcement and refraction in the fictional context. Laura, the heroine of Mary Brunton's Self-Control (1811, reprinted in 1832), twice in her nightly examination of her thoughts and actions of the day, finds she is making an idol of the unworthy Colonel Hargrave: "She accused herself of having given up her love, her wishes, her hopes and fears, almost her worship to an idol" (II1).

The issue of her self-examination was the conviction that she had bestowed on a frail, fallible creature, a love disproportioned to the merits of any created thing; that she had obstinately clung to her idol after she had seen its baseness; and that now the broken reed whereon she had leaned was taken away, that she might restore her trust and her love where alone they were due. (256)

A reader may remember intratextually Helen's warning that Jane thought too much of "creatures feeble as you" (81).

Had the second volume of Jane Eyre ended as originally intended, there would have been a long pause for the retrospective and prospective reconfiguration of the novel. Poised on the eve of its climax, reaching the hills of Beulah, the love story would have had to share the

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foreground with a long-threatened "counteracting breeze" (187), the emphatic and ominous religious warning. The memorable chapter ending with the news of the thunderbolt, Jane's plea for "a good spirit to suggest a judicious and satisfactory response" to Rochester's question about the validity of "overleaping an obstacle of custom" (274), and innumerable other details in earlier portions of the text would cluster around the religious emphasis here. Such details would be reinforced by the religious aura of the governess novel occasionally hovering over Jane Eyre and the insistent questions about the nature of reality and the supernatural raised by the Gothic elements. Had volume 2 ended emphatically with Rochester eclipsing God in Jane's thoughts and vision, most readers, certainly most mid-nineteenth-century readers, would inevitably project strong moral and religious impediments to the marriage. These would be resolved, this volume-ending might well suggest, not as Godwin or George Sand might resolve them (in favor of passion and the self), but more conventionally, yet, somehow, not too unhappily. Somehow.

Even if such expectations or projections were to prove "correct," and this ending would prove an aesthetically justifiable foreshadowing, it would change the affective experience of the novel and its exploration of moral issues drastically. For to insist on a religious reading and configuration of the novel at this point would make the reader's understanding of the world of the novel outdistance Jane's. We would be "above" Jane, looking down on her struggle to come to an awareness of the reality we have already apprehended. The prevailing affective response would be irony, not sympathy. But now, despite the narrator's reminders by distancing utterance—"in those days"—and novelistic topoi and the consequent double-voicedness, the reader is not moved by the ending of the volume to the privileged position of the elder Jane but is once more, as the volume continues to the wedding day, almost monologically with the younger Jane, in the middest. And this at least partial blindness of the authorial reader, as well as of Jane, is essential for the narrative strategy and ontological grounding of the novel.