

JANE EYRE

CHARLOTTE BRONTË



EDITED BY RICHARD J. DUNN

A NORTON CRITICAL EDITION
THIRD EDITION

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Charlotte Brontë
JANE EYRE



AN AUTHORITATIVE TEXT
CONTEXTS
CRITICISM

THIRD EDITION

Edited by

RICHARD J. DUNN

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

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Preface to the Third Norton Critical Edition

This third Norton Critical Edition of *Jane Eyre* provides complete text, totally revised explanatory notes, expanded contextual materials, and two discussions of *Jane Eyre* films. The criticism section retains essays by Adrienne Rich and Sandra Gilbert and adds two more recent studies by Jerome Beaty and Lisa Sternlieb, who have expanded and adapted their commentaries especially for this edition.

The text is based on the third edition, published in 1848, but I have included a facsimile of the 1847 first edition title page, because after that edition Brontë deleted “edited by” so the work might seem more directly that of Currer Bell. Rather than adhere to the separate chapter numbering of the third edition’s three-volume format, chapters here are consecutive for easy reference with indication of volume divisions included in explanatory footnotes. I have corrected obvious spelling, punctuation, and typographical errors; for documentation of variants and information about the manuscript, readers should consult the Clarendon *Jane Eyre* (1969), edited by Jane Jack and Margaret Smith.

Although I have applied the same guidelines for explanatory footnotes as in the earlier editions and do not supply information readily available in desk dictionaries, the notes now provide more of the substance and significance of biblical and literary allusions, continue to translate French passages where necessary, and note several instances where Brontë’s was the first recorded use of a word or phrase. Before preparing the footnotes, I asked two undergraduates who were familiar with *Jane Eyre* to read an edition with no notes and to mark what they thought should be explained. From discussions with them, as well as from suggestions from other students over the years, it became clear that notes from nearly thirty years ago were inadequate.

This edition’s “Contexts” section reorganizes and expands that of the earlier two editions to focus on Charlotte Brontë’s schooling and teaching, early writing, and reactions to readers and reviewers. For the second edition, Professor Christine Alexander introduced and edited parts of Charlotte’s “Roe Head Journal,” and for this edition she has

added two additional fragments from that journal of Brontë's reflections and retreats to her childhood writing. This is the first time that these have been published in their entirety to bring together the extant journal manuscript.

Also new to this edition are both illustrations from and commentary on Thomas Bewick's *History of British Birds*, the book that so fascinated both young Charlotte and young Jane Eyre. There is a new section dealing with Charlotte's experiences as a governess and her later advice to a friend concerning the future of his daughters if they were to become governesses.

Information about the novel's acceptance, publication, new editions, and contemporary reception is now arranged chronologically so readers may follow easily the sequence of events that attracted such speculative public interest in regard to *Jane Eyre's*—Curren Bell's—Charlotte Brontë's authorship and social and religious views. Much of this information comes from letters, now reliably edited by Margaret Smith in the two-volume *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë* (1995, 2000). In response to students' requests for additional excerpts from Elizabeth Gaskell's *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, this edition provides Gaskell's comments on Charlotte as a woman writer and also on her responses to critics.

Late-twentieth-century criticism of *Jane Eyre* has been strongly influenced by the readings of Adrienne Rich and Sandra Gilbert. Like Virginia Woolf before her, Rich reads the novel as a story of the powerless woman in mid-nineteenth-century England. Gilbert, who with Susan Gubar took from *Jane Eyre* the title cue for their influential *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (1979), writes of Jane's encounter with Rochester's mad wife as the novel's central confrontation.

Jerome Beaty, with special attention to Jane's relationship with St. John Rivers, asks us to consider the novel both externally "as a dialogue between the conflicting, open-ended worldviews of the younger and older Jane" and internally "as an unresolved dialogue between the values of both Janes" and of St. John. Lisa Sternlieb discusses "a series of parallel confidence games" in the relationship of Jane and Rochester and argues that "the extraordinary power" of the novel lies in the fact "that we are being seduced—as is Jane the character—by lies." Both Beaty and Sternlieb have revised earlier studies for this Norton Critical Edition.

In its own time the nineteenth-century English novel often spawned stage versions, and in the twentieth century it has been a rich resource for filmmakers. The history of *Jane Eyre* on screen and the story of the accommodation necessary with change of media are not unique to this novel, as Jeffrey Sconce points out in "The Cinematic Reconstruction of *Jane Eyre*." Donna Marie Nudd, who has written previously about

film adaptations of this novel, offers a new overview and listing of widely available *Jane Eyre* films and videos.

The expanded "Selected Bibliography" directs readers to important biographical and critical resources, many of which have been published since the second edition of this text.

I acknowledge particular indebtedness to Christine Alexander and Jane Sellars for Alexander's editions of Brontë's juvenilia and for their jointly edited *The Art of Charlotte Brontë* (1996), an annotated and lavishly illustrated catalog of all known drawings and paintings of the Brontë sisters and their brother, Branwell. With the help of this volume and its excellent discussions of the Brontës' interest in the visual arts and with the further assistance of art historian Susan Casteras, I have realized the extent and importance not simply of Jane as painter but of *Jane Eyre* as a key text for anyone interested in the visual dimensions of Victorian fiction. To Casteras I am grateful for having suggested J. E. Millais's *Waiting* as an apt cover illustration. Margaret Smith, editor of the excellent edition of Charlotte Brontë letters, has been most generous in providing advice and access to proof copy of her second volume. As they adapted their longer studies to this edition, Jerome Beaty and Lisa Sternlieb have had larger roles than they may have realized in the larger decisions I have had to make about what contexts and critical commentary can best serve students. I thank the University of Washington Libraries, particularly Sandra Kroupa, for her assistance with the Bewick materials, Barb Grayson for extraordinary interlibrary loan service, and Helene Williams for Victorian reference assistance and especially for making possible undergraduate research connected with the making of this edition. Professors Michael Shapiro, Sara van den Berg, and Jennifer Holberg have provided expert advice for the textual annotation. Knowing well the commitment of these professionals to faculty and students, I, too, owe much to the generations of students who have continued to teach me what we all want and need to know about *Jane Eyre*. Three students have been engaged with Brontë as a subject for their undergraduate research. Ann Plough has contributed much material on the Victorian governess; Melissa Sodeman assisted greatly with initial bibliography and with Brontë backgrounds; Suzanne Pitre, while working on a study of *Villette*, has led me to think newly about the problems of revelation and masking that occur in fictional autobiography. For listening to and looking at *Jane Eyre* with an unwincing eye as we proofread, Laura Widdice performed a labor of love for which I am most grateful. Acknowledgment in print is small token for the generous and professional assistance of these people.

RICHARD J. DUNN
April 2000

The Text of
JANE EYRE



JANE EYRE.

An Autobiography.

EDITED BY

CURRER BELL.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
SMITH, ELDER, AND CO., CORNHILL.

1847.

[Facsimile of First Edition title page]

TO
W. M. THACKERAY, Esq.
THIS WORK
Is Respectfully Inscribed
BY THE AUTHOR

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Author's Preface¹

A PREFACE to the first edition of 'Jane Eyre' being unnecessary, I gave none: this second edition demands a few words both of acknowledgment and miscellaneous remark.

My thanks are due in three quarters.

To the Public, for the indulgent ear it has inclined to a plain tale with few pretensions.

To the Press, for the fair field its honest suffrage has opened to an obscure aspirant.

To my Publishers, for the aid their tact, their energy, their practical sense, and frank liberality have afforded an unknown and unrecommended Author.

To the Press and the Public are but vague personifications for me, and I must thank them in vague terms; but my Publishers are definite: so are certain generous critics who have encouraged me as only large-hearted and high-minded men know how to encourage a struggling stranger; to them, *i.e.*, to my Publishers and the select Reviewers, I say cordially, Gentlemen, I thank you from my heart.

Having thus acknowledged what I owe those who have aided and approved me, I turn to another class; a small one, so far as I know, but not, therefore, to be overlooked. I mean the timorous or carping few who doubt the tendency of such books as 'Jane Eyre': in whose eyes whatever is unusual is wrong; whose ears detect in each protest against bigotry—that parent of crime—an insult to piety, that regent of God on earth. I would suggest to such doubters certain obvious distinctions; I would remind them of certain simple truths.

Conventionality is not morality. Self-righteousness is not religion. To attack the first is not to assail the last. To pluck the mask from the face of the Pharisee, is not to lift an impious hand to the Crown of Thorns.²

These things and deeds are diametrically opposed: they are as distinct as is vice from virtue. Men too often confound them: they should not be confounded: appearance should not be mistaken for truth; narrow human doctrines, that only tend to elate and magnify a few, should not be substituted for the world-redeeming creed of Christ. There is—I repeat it—a difference; and it is a good, and not a bad action to mark broadly and clearly the line of separation between them.

The world may not like to see these ideas *dissevered*, for it has been accustomed to blend them; finding it convenient to make external

1. The first edition was published on October 19, 1847; the second, which included this preface, on January 22, 1848. For a summary of preface revisions, see *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë*, Vol. 1, ed. Margaret Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 581 n.

2. Pharisees were conventional to a fault, masking in legalistic literalism their self-righteousness. To expose them would not be unchristian.

show pass for sterling worth—to let white-washed walls vouch for clean shrines. It may hate him who dares to scrutinise and expose—to rase the gilding, and show base metal under it—penetrate the sepulchre, and reveal charnel relics: but hate as it will, it is indebted to him.

Ahab did not like Micaiah, because he never prophesied good concerning him, but evil: probably he liked the sycophant son of Che-naannah better; yet might Ahab have escaped a bloody death, had he but stopped his ears to flattery and opened them to faithful counsel.³

There is a man in our own days whose words are not framed to tickle delicate ears: who, to my thinking, comes before the great ones of society, much as the son of Imlah came before the throned Kings of Judah and Israel; and who speaks truth as deep, with a power as prophet-like and as vital—a mien as dauntless and as daring. Is the satirist of 'Vanity Fair' admired in high places?⁴ I cannot tell; but I think if some of those amongst whom he hurls the Greek fire of his sarcasm, and over whom he flashes the levin-brand of his denunciation, were to take his warnings in time—they or their seed might yet escape a fatal Ramoth-Gilead.

Why have I alluded to this man? I have alluded to him, Reader, because I think I see in him an intellect profounder and more unique than his contemporaries have yet recognised; because I regard him as the first social regenerator of the day—as the very master of that working corps who would restore to rectitude the warped system of things; because I think no commentator on his writings has yet found the comparison that suits him, the terms which rightly characterise his talent. They say he is like Fielding;⁵ they talk of his wit, humour, comic powers. He resembles Fielding as an eagle does a vulture: Fielding could stoop on carrion, but Thackeray never does. His wit is bright, his humour attractive, but both bear the same relation to his serious genius, that the mere lambent sheet-lightning, playing under the edge of the summer cloud, does to the electric death-spark hid in its womb. Finally; I have alluded to Mr. Thackeray, because to him—if he will accept the tribute of a total stranger—I have dedicated this second edition of 'JANE EYRE.'

Currer Bell

December 21st, 1847.

3. Micaiah, son of Imlah, foretold disaster if Ahab took his armies to Ramoth-Gilead. But believing the false prophet Zedekiah, Ahab imprisoned Micaiah, whose prophecy was fulfilled by Ahab's defeat and death (1 Kings 22).

4. William Makepeace Thackeray (1811–1863) was best known in 1847 as a satirical essayist. *Vanity Fair* was appearing in monthly numbers when Charlotte dedicated her novel to him.

5. Henry Fielding (1707–1754), novelist, dramatist, and satirist, best known for *Tom Jones*.

Note to the Third Edition¹

I avail myself of the opportunity which a third edition of *Jane Eyre* affords me, of again addressing a word to the Public, to explain that my claim to the title of novelist rests on this one work alone. If, therefore, the authorship of other works of fiction has been attributed to me, an honor is awarded where it is not merited; and consequently, denied where it is justly due.

This explanation will serve to rectify mistakes which may already have been made, and to prevent future errors.

Currer Bell
April 13th, 1848.

1. This edition was published on April 15, 1848, and included selected "Opinions of the Press." This note was Charlotte's response to misleading statements by Thomas Newby, the publisher of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* and Anne Brontë's *Agnes Grey*, to capitalize on the success of *Jane Eyre*. His advertisements gave the impression that Ellis Bell (Emily) was the author of *Jane Eyre*.

Jane Eyre

Chapter I

There was no possibility of taking a walk that day. We had been wandering, indeed, in the leafless shrubbery an hour in the morning; but since dinner (Mrs. Reed, when there was no company, dined early) the cold winter wind had brought with it clouds so sombre, and a rain so penetrating, that further outdoor exercise was now out of the question.

I was glad of it: I never liked long walks, especially on chilly afternoons: dreadful to me was the coming home in the raw twilight, with nipped fingers and toes, and a heart saddened by the chidings of Bessie, the nurse, and humbled by the consciousness of my physical inferiority to Eliza, John, and Georgiana Reed.

The said Eliza, John, and Georgiana were now clustered round their mamma in the drawing-room: she lay reclined on the sofa by the fire-side, and with her darlings about her (for the time neither quarrelling nor crying) looked perfectly happy. Me, she had dispensed from joining the group; saying, 'She regretted to be under the necessity of keeping me at a distance; but that until she heard from Bessie and could discover by her own observation that I was endeavouring in good earnest to acquire a more sociable and childlike disposition, a more attractive and sprightly manner—something lighter, franker, more natural, as it were—she really must exclude me from privileges intended only for contented, happy, little children.'

'What does Bessie say I have done?' I asked.

'Jane, I don't like cavillers or questioners: besides, there is something truly forbidding in a child taking up her elders in that manner. Be seated somewhere; and until you can speak pleasantly, remain silent.'

A small breakfast-room adjoined the drawing-room. I slipped in there. It contained a bookcase: I soon possessed myself of a volume, taking care that it should be one stored with pictures. I mounted into the window-seat: gathering up my feet, I sat cross-legged like a Turk; and, having drawn the red moreen curtain nearly close, I was shrined in double retirement.

Folds of scarlet drapery shut in my view to the right hand; to the left were the clear panes of glass, protecting, but not separating me

from the drear November day. At intervals, while turning over the leaves of my book, I studied the aspect of that winter afternoon. Afar, it offered a pale blank of mist and cloud; near, a scene of wet lawn and storm-beat shrub, with ceaseless rain sweeping away wildly before a long and lamentable blast.

I returned to my book—Bewick's 'History of British Birds':¹ the letterpress thereof I cared little for, generally speaking; and yet there were certain introductory pages that, child as I was, I could not pass quite as a blank. They were those which treat of the haunts of sea-fowl; of 'the solitary rocks and promontories' by them only inhabited; of the coast of Norway, studded with isles from its southern extremity, the Lindeness, or Naze, to the North Cape——

Where the Northern Ocean, in vast whirls,
Boils round the naked, melancholy isles
Of farthest Thule; and the Atlantic surge
Pours in among the stormy Hebrides.

Nor could I pass unnoticed the suggestion of the bleak shores of Lapland, Siberia, Spitzbergen, Nova Zembla, Iceland, Greenland, with 'the vast sweep of the Arctic Zone, and those forlorn regions of dreary space—that reservoir of frost and snow, where firm fields of ice, the accumulation of centuries of winters, glazed in Alpine heights above heights, surround the pole, and concentrate the multiplied rigors of extreme cold.' Of these death-white realms I formed an idea of my own: shadowy, like all the half-comprehended notions that float dim through children's brains, but strangely impressive. The words in these introductory pages connected themselves with the succeeding vignettes, and gave significance to the rock standing up alone in a sea of billow and spray; to the broken boat stranded on a desolate coast; to the cold and ghastly moon glancing through bars of cloud at a wreck just sinking.

I cannot tell what sentiment haunted the quite solitary churchyard, with its inscribed headstone; its gate, its two trees, its low horizon, girdled by a broken wall, and its newly-risen crescent, attesting the hour of eventide.

The two ships becalmed on a torpid sea I believed to be marine phantoms.

The fiend pinning down the thief's pack behind him I passed over quickly: it was an object of terror.

So was the black, horned thing seated aloof on a rock, surveying a distant crowd surrounding a gallows.

Each picture told a story; mysterious often to my undeveloped

1. Jane quotes and paraphrases from the introduction to the second volume of Thomas Bewick's *The History of British Birds* (1804). The lines of poetry and six of the vignettes she describes are from that volume, and one is from the first volume (1797).