

her to run off with him to the south of France, or even indeed to the moon, where at one point he had playfully promised to bring her to "a cave in one of the white valleys among the volcano-tops" (295). And why, after all, shouldn't politically astute readers wish that she and her lover had at least eloped, if not to the moon, to France? Such real-life literary heroines as George Sand and George Eliot had done as much! Why did feminist critics, of all people, have to accept the marriage-or-death imperatives built into what Nancy Miller called "the heroine's text"?

In those days, however, there seemed to be no middle ground between the banal rhetoric of the pulp novelist who declared that "*Jane Eyre* is one of the most passionate of romantic novels" because "it throbs with the sensuality of a woman's growing love for a man; there is the deep longing of the lonely heart in its every line" (Nudd 140) and Adrienne Rich's stern insistence that "we believe in the erotic and intellectual sympathy of [Jane and Rochester's] marriage because it has been prepared by [Jane's] refusal to accept it under circumstances which were mythic, romantic or sexually oppressive" (Nudd 140). Indeed, to many of us the "deep longing" of a woman's "lonely heart" for the "brute, / Brute heart of a brute like" a man appeared to be a radical weakness—a neurotic flaw—in the otherwise talented and politically correct Charlotte Brontë. Hadn't such feverish yearnings for the love of a (bad) Byronic hero left her vulnerable to Thackeray's rude ruminations on the "poor little woman of genius! The fiery little eager brave tremulous homely-faced creature! I can read a great deal of her life as I fancy in her book, and see that rather than have fame, rather than any other earthly good or mayhap heavenly one she wants some Tomkins or another to love and be in love with" (Lerner 199).

Rich's classic (and still brilliant) essay on *Jane Eyre* is entitled "The Temptations of a Motherless Woman," and it focuses on the moment, not long after Rochester's seductive plea to Jane that she flee with him to France, when the maternal moon rose to reveal a "white human form" gazing at the tormented governess and gloriously admonishing "'My daughter, flee temptation!'" Brontë herself had had to flee temptation (though she had done so with considerable ambivalence) when she left Brussels and her adored M. Heger. And as a feminist critic in the seventies, I knew that I too had to flee temptation. I had to rigorously repress my own desire for Jane's and Rochester's "furious lovemaking" to reach a romantic—and more specifically a sexual—climax and undertake instead a weary journey across the moors to a political position where, along with Charlotte Brontë and Adrienne Rich, I could rejoice in our heroine's new life as "a village schoolmistress, free and honest, in a breezy mountain nook in the healthy heart of England" (386).



constraints of Thrushcross Grange. Soon the women's movement would provide me with a vocabulary through which to define these "patriarchal strictures and structures" that fostered what Matthew Arnold, writing of Charlotte Brontë, called "hunger, rebellion and rage" in so many of the heroines (and novels and authors) my daughter and I admired. But my uncertainty about the issues at hand was probably reflected in the first title I proposed to give the class Susan and I were planning for the fall of 1974: "Upstairs/Downstairs," after the popular television series.

That I was rather taken aback when Susan quite reasonably objected to my title as not only vulgar but misleading shows, I think, how much I had to learn about the subject we were soon going to teach. Yet the replacement on which we quickly settled—"The Madwoman in the Attic"—was from my point of view, anyway, merely a more precise formulation of the argument I wanted to make about neighboring fictional spaces inhabited by turbulent spirits. Thus, when Susan and I decided that the course to which we'd given that name had been so illuminating, indeed, so intellectually transformative for both of us that we had to write a book based on what we'd been learning as well as teaching, it fell to me to write an article (out of which we'd develop a chapter) through which the madwoman of Thornfield Hall resonantly wanders, with her mystery breaking out "now in fire and now in blood, at the dearest hours of night" (239). And inevitably, of course, my article was both infused with and shaped by the extraordinary feminist excitement of the season in the mid-seventies that had inspired me to abandon my sixties snobbery about "articles," along with my bias toward poetry rather than fiction. Bliss was it in that spring to be alive, but to be embarking on a feminist analysis of one of the greatest and most influential novels in the female literary tradition was very heaven!

My analysis was a product of its historical moment, and so it obviously emphasized just those aspects of *Jane Eyre* that dramatized issues to which we in the women's movement had begun to awaken with special passion in those years: the "hunger, rebellion and rage" fostered in both Charlotte Brontë and her heroines by a coercive cultural architecture; the subversive strategies through which author and characters alike sought to undermine the structures of oppression; and the egalitarian sexual as well as social relationships toward which the novel strove. That Brontë's earliest readers had themselves been struck by these elements in her work seemed to me evident, not only from Arnold's well-known phrase, but also from other remarks made by nineteenth-century reviewers. Not surprisingly, I was particularly fond of Elizabeth Rigby's 1848 assertion that "Jane Eyre is throughout the personification of an unregenerate and undisciplined spirit" (Gilbert and Gubar 173-4), of Anne Mozlev's 1853 comment that the book seemed to have been written by "an



alien ... from society [who was] amenable to none of its laws" (423), and of Margaret Oliphant's 1855 observation that "the most alarming revolution of modern times has followed the invasion of *Jane Eyre*" (Oliphant 557).

There were, however, a few Victorian responses to which I paid less attention. I don't think, for instance, that I quite knew what to make of the clause that preceded Mrs. Oliphant's description of the "alarming revolution" that ensued after "the invasion of *Jane Eyre*": "Ten years ago we professed an orthodox system of novel-making. Our lovers were humble and devoted." And still less was I certain how to treat her further description of the book's distinguishing characteristic as its portrayal of "furious lovemaking"—a kind of lovemaking that she thought constituted "a wild declaration of the 'Rights of Woman' in a new aspect." To be frank, seventies feminism was uneasy in the presence of the erotic, torn between Erica Jong's notorious celebration of the "zipless fuck" and Kate Millett's not unrelated claim that "there is no remedy to sexual politics in marriage" (147). Commenting on the writings of two contemporaries she much admired, Sylvia Plath and Diane Wakoski, Adrienne Rich noted in her influential "When We Dead Awaken" that "in the work of both ... [the] charisma of Man seems to come purely from his power over [woman] and his control of the world by force, not from anything fertile or life-giving in him," and this because of "the oppressive nature of male/female relations" (35-6). Within a decade, Andrea Dworkin would declare that (hetero)sexual intercourse virtually by nature entails a tyrannical master/slave relationship between male and female, with the man "communicating to her cell by cell her own inferior status ... shoving it into her, over and over ... until she gives up and gives in—which is called *surrender* in the male lexicon" (Dworkin 100). And such a diagnosis of desire would seem to have been a logical outcome of Plath's embittered "Every woman adores a Fascist, / The boot in the face, the brute / Brute heart of a brute like you" (Plath 223).

"*Furious* lovemaking" in *Jane Eyre*? Well, the oxymoronic phrase could be at least in part understood if one factored in the ferocity with which the novel urged "the 'Rights of Woman' in a new aspect." But from the born-again perspective of seventies feminism that new aspect had more to do with Jane's declarations of independence *from* Rochester than with expressions of erotic feeling *for* him. To be sure, I saw Jane's story as ending with a vision of egalitarian marriage that was a consummation devoutly to be wished, if only a utopian one. But how were we to understand the complex, at times tyrannical or even sadistic "lovemaking" that led to a fantasy of such bliss? When in moments of what sociologists call "introspection" I analyzed my own earlier responses to the relationship between Jane and her "master," I had to admit to myself that in my teens I'd wanted more than anything for