as clear to Mrs. Oliphant as it had been to St. John Rivers himself, for Brontë's heroine was quite frankly replacing a Christian theology of renunciation with a more hedonistic theology of love. Importantly, she does not know at this point that Rochester has been freed to marry her by Bertha's death. Instead, she determines to return to him with a lucid consciousness of the "temptation" he constitutes. The "spirit, I trust, is willing, but the flesh, I see, is weak" (446), comments the cousin whose "iron shroud" of morality she has experienced as a deadly—a "killing"—superego, but the ambiguity of her response to his warning hints that a deep skepticism toward received morality is driving her back toward the "furious lovemaking" she had only temporarily rejected: "'My spirit,' I answered mentally, 'is willing to do what is right; and my flesh, I hope, is strong enough to accomplish the will of Heaven, *when once that will is known to me*'" (446; emphasis added).

To be sure, those of us who know the story realize, as Jane does not, that the will of Heaven is for her to fulfil her desire within the bounds of lawful matrimony—but there is surely a sense in which that will (indistinguishable from the will of the narrative, after all) has chosen to reward her precisely for the acquiescence in temptation that underlies her challenge to the clerical custom St. John so frostily incarnates. Thus while there is no doubt justice in Adrienne Rich's claim 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," that assertion must be qualified by a recognition of the powerful Romanticism (with a capital "R") that shapes not just Jane's but Brontë's refusal of circumstances that are drearily quotidian, anti-romantic, or morally oppressive (105). In a proud denial of St. John's insulting insistence that she is "formed for labor, not for love" (428), Jane chooses—and wins—a destiny of *love's* labors.

As seventies feminism (rightly) saw it, of course, given the inequality of the sexes in nineteenth-century England if not in Brontë's imagination, the Bluebeard in Rochester had in some sense to be diminished, even mutilated, in order for the Cinderella in Jane to become whole. And the redeemed pair had to retreat into a world outside history so as to construct a personal story of fulfilled desire. Yet if the Rochester of Ferndean appears at first to be a "sightless Samson" who is "desperate and brooding" as "some wronged and fettered wild beast" (456), Jane's yearning gaze discerns in him still the physical properties that had first aroused her desire, and once more she lingeringly catalogs them. "His form was of the same strong and stalwart contour as ever: his port was still erect, his hair was still raven black," she tells us, confessing that she longs to "drop a kiss on that brow of rock, and on those lips so sternly sealed beneath it" (456).

two best-known versions—the 1944 film directed by George Stevenson and the recent (1996) film directed by Franco Zeffirelli—generally speaking "read" the book as a paperback romance that "throbs with the sensuality of a woman's growing love for a man" because "there is the deep longing of the lonely heart in its every line." The proposal scene in the Zeffirelli movie is particularly banal. True, it offers erotic intensity. Indeed, the soulful kiss with which Charlotte Gainsbourg rewards the avowals of William Hurt was classed as one of the "ten best movie kisses of the year" in a 1996 film roundup. But, neither "furious" nor Romantically mystical, the lovers' embraces are determinedly healthy in a "sensitive" postmodern sort of way, as if Jane and Rochester had separately been taking lessons from Dr. Ruth. And even the madwoman in this film seems trendily sedated, less like "some strange wild animal" than a doped-up housewife in a neatly starched nightgown from a *Victoria's Secret* catalog.

Rather more appropriately, the proposal scene in the 1944 movie does feature a kind of operatic melodrama, with Jane (Joan Fontaine) cringing before a swaggeringly Byronic Rochester (Orson Welles) and the pair's confessions of love punctuated by Welles's wildly glittering eyes and counterpointed by a howling wind that suggests the onset of tempestuous desires, as well as a ferocious streak of lightning that cleaves the novel's infamous "great horse-chestnut" in one fell swoop. But there's hardly any "wild declaration of the 'Rights of Woman'" in either an old or a "new aspect" here, much less the sort of "furious lovemaking" that would have shocked Victorian audiences. What I think must have impressed me as a teenager, however, was the voyeuristic fixity of Jane's gaze at Rochester, a gaze that (as current film theory would have it) gave Joan Fontaine's otherwise incorrectly timid Jane a compelling epistemological authority.[11] Equally impressive to me, also, must have been the extraordinarily powerful moment when, as if to convey the dangers presented by the "furious lovemaking" that might constitute an "alarming revolution," Stevenson's film positions us—its viewers—in the shadows with the unseen, howling madwoman, while Welles and Fontaine stand in a lighted doorway as if confronting the forces of (sexual) darkness only tentatively contained in the attic. In a brilliant stroke, Stevenson exploits a cinematic reticence comparable to Brontë's narrative secrecy: we never see the madwoman as Jane and Rochester see her; instead, we see the lovers as *she*—raging with pain and desire—sees *them*. Finally, perhaps, that fierce gaze of darkness is what Jane and Rochester, similarly riddled by desire, assimilate into themselves. And perhaps, too, their defiant acceptance of such darkness makes the "wild nights" of their Romanticism so compelling to me that once again, to my own surprise, here I am, theorizing about the novel in which they star.

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unconsecrated. Long since you ought to have crushed it: now you should blush to allude to it. You think of Mr. Rochester?'" (439). But indeed, Jane doesn't merely "think" of Mr. Rochester. Rather, in a moment of mystically orgasmic passion she virtually brings him into being. As St. John prays over her, reading (tellingly) from the Book of Revelation inscribed by his namesake—a sacred text in which female sexuality, figured as the Whore of Babylon, is banished to the desert so that a new heaven and new earth can be constituted from the blood of the lamb—the "May moon shin[es] in through the uncurtained window" (442), as powerfully as the July moon had shone on the night at Thornfield when a glorious maternal figure bade Jane to "'flee [*from*] temptation.'" Now, however, the same moon silently advises the heroine to flee *to* temptation, in a moment whose erotic charge is unmistakable:

> *All the house was still; for I believe all, except St John and myself, were now retired to rest. The one candle was dying out: the room was full of moonlight. My heart beat fast and thick: I heard its throb. Suddenly it stood still to an inexpressible feeling that thrilled it through, and passed at once to my head and extremities. The feeling was not like an electric shock, but it was quite as sharp, as strange, as startling: it acted on my senses as if their utmost activity hitherto had been but torpor, from which they were now summoned, and forced to wake. They rose expectant: eye and ear waited while the flesh quivered on my bones.* (444)

In fact, what Jane discovers through this climax of impassioned epiphany is that the paradise for which she longs is not St. John's heaven of spiritual transcendence but rather an earthly paradise of physical fulfillment. And it is at this instant, of course, that she hears her "master's" voice and declares that she is "coming" to him. Her saintly—and sanctimonious—cousin had prayed "for those whom the temptations of the world and the flesh were luring from the narrow path" (442), had "claimed the boon of a brand snatched from the burning" (442–3). But although she had briefly seen "death's gates opening, show[ing] eternity beyond" and toyed with the notion that since "safety and bliss [were] there, all here might be sacrificed in a second" (444), she now, definitively, chooses "the burning" of her own desire for gratification "here" rather than "there": "My powers were in play and in force," she declares, explaining that she now willingly "fell on my knees; and prayed in *my way—a different way to St John's, but effective in its fashion*" (445; emphasis added).

That this "way" of prayer is defiantly different must have been, again,

There can be no question, then, that what Jane calls the "pleasure in my services" both she and Rochester experience in their utopian woodland is a pleasure in physical as well as spiritual intimacy, erotic as well as intellectual communion. "[E]ver more absolutely bone of [Rochester's] bone and flesh of his flesh," Jane has reconstructed herself as literally part of her husband's body—"his right hand"—in a postlapsarian Eden where she is also the "apple of his eye" (476), and he is her audience, fit though few. In the meantime, St. John Rivers—the quintessentially anti-erotic Bluebeard of self-denial—has been banished from an England where wild nights are now not the torment but the luxury of Jane and Rochester. It is no doubt to emphasize this point that the novel ends with an otherwise puzzling focus on the unmarried missionary's anticipation of death in faraway India ("My Master ... has forewarned me. Daily He announces more distinctly, 'Surely I come quickly!' and hourly I more eagerly respond, 'Amen; even so, come, Lord Jesus!'" [477]). With the exorcism of both the id-like Bertha and the superegoistic St. John from the plot, repression can be repressed, sacrifice sacrificed. Jane has come to Rochester, and St. John is coming to God.

That Jane and Rochester have built their bower of bliss in a "nowhere" kind of place, however, has generic as well as theological significance, reminding us yet again that despite the richly observed texture of, say, the Lowood episode, *Jane Eyre* is more a romance in the mode of such diversely Gothic descendants as *The Turn of the Screw*, *Rebecca*, and *Wide Sargasso Sea* than it is a "realistic" novel in the mode of *The Mill on the Floss* or *Middlemarch*. In a sense, Rochester *has* brought "Mademoiselle" to the "cave in one of the white valleys" of the moon where he had fantasied to Adèle that he would bring his bride—or at least he has lured her to the *Minnegrotte*, the sacramental Cave of Love where Tristan and Isolde consummate their love in the medieval romance.[9] For it's arguable, indeed, that *Jane Eyre's* "furious lovemaking" participates as much in the mystical Romanticism of Wagner's nineteenth-century re-visioning of the Tristan plot as it does in the genres of fairytale, Gothic, and feminist polemic. Hard as it is to imagine a happy ending to the adulterous affair of Wagner's tortured lovers (could Isolde ever have said "Reader, I married him"?), the merging that Jane and Rochester achieve at Ferndean, as they become bone of each other's bone and flesh of each other's flesh, recalls the desire of "Tristan *und* Isolde" to eradicate the *und* and become "TristanIsolde" or, better, "nicht mehr Isolde! / nicht mehr Tristan! / Ohne Nennen, / ohne Trennen."[10]

Of course, if I return in conclusion to the comparisons of *Jane Eyre*-the-novel and *Jane Eyre*-the-movie that I attempted earlier in this revisionary enterprise, I'd certainly have to concede that none of the many screen translations of Brontë's novel are especially Wagnerian. On the contrary, the