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Borderwork

FEMINIST ENGAGEMENTS WITH COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

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8

Jane's Family Romances

MARIANNE HIRSCH

> Narrative is, in sum, the most elaborate kind of attempt, on the part of the speaking subject, after syntactic competence, to situate his or her self among his or her desires and their taboos, that is, at the interior of the oedipal triangle.
>
> —Julia Kristeva

> The urge to intellectual and artistic creation and the productivity of motherhood spring from common sources, and it seems very natural that one should be capable of replacing the other.
>
> —Helene Deutsch

> Although most mothers have been and are women, mothering is potentially work for men and women. . . . There is no reason to believe that one sex rather than the other is more capable of doing maternal work.
>
> —Sara Ruddick

"When his first-born was put into his arms, he could see that the boy had inherited his own eyes, as they once were—large, brilliant and black."[1] Paradoxically, the novel's only hint of Jane Eyre's maternity actually serves to affirm the paternity of Edward Rochester: his gaze at his son, and the male line of transmission by which the son inherits his father's eyes and therefore this same gaze. This affirmation of paternity is all the more incongruous in a paragraph that seems to challenge masculine dominance. In revealing Rochester's regained eyesight, the novel still reserves access and control of the symbolic for Jane and grants her husband the discernment of nature, not of books: "He cannot read or write much; but he can find his way without being led by the hand: the sky is no longer a blank to him—the earth no longer a void" (397).

Exploring this incongruity and looking, in particular, at how maternal and paternal functions are deployed in Brontë's novel provides an opportunity for a new look at a novel that has become a classic, if not a cult text, in the women's studies canon. It is possible to trace, through readings of *Jane Eyre*, the evolution of feminist literary interpretation: all the major trends are clearly represented. For feminist comparatists, however, *Jane Eyre* is more than such a touchstone. In reading the novel through the perspective of the family romance, I hope to bring together the formalist, generic, and cultural interests of the comparatist with the psychoanalytic focus of the feminist literary critic, and to bring them to bear on a text which, set at the moment of European imperial expansion, in itself raises questions about any comparatist, cross-cultural venture. As I teach this novel—and I have taught it in both comparative literature and women's studies courses—and as I write about it, I still feel as though I were shuttling back and forth between my two identities, my comparatist and my feminist selves. I hope that this reading will show some of that discursive disjointedness even as it helps to bridge it. I also hope that it will allow me to write into it my personal as well as my theoretical commitments.

Jane Eyre offers an especially radical elaboration of a *female* family romance model present in a number of Victorian novels by women writers: Brontë gives Jane the possibility not only of becoming a mother, but also of combining maternity with a different, and in the ideology of the period a contradictory, labor—the imaginative and self-engendering act of writing her own story. What makes it possible for Jane to become a mother, a condition that most nineteenth-century women writers will do anything to avoid for their heroines, is connected to the ways in which maternity is defined and deployed in the text. One key factor in this deployment is the distribution of a parental role to Edward Rochester, which enables us to read the father-son dyad described in the quoted passage as a sign not of Rochester's *paternity* but of what we might think of as his *male maternity*. Other factors include the particular class structure that underlies the novel and the specific definitions of what constitutes the labor of mothering in the first place. These definitions, however, raise certain literary questions as well; for example, one might ask whether Jane's maternity allows her to adopt a maternal voice in the text and to develop a maternal textuality, or whether, in spite of her motherhood, she continues to write her childhood fantasies and experiences.

In bringing *Jane Eyre* into the comparatist canon, and in reading it through the generic lens of the family romance, I hope also to bring it *back* to women's studies, transformed. Why the family romance? One genre where comparatist and feminist concerns have intersected fre-

Part of this essay is based on my discussion of the family romance in the introduction and chap. 2 of *The Mother-Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989). The essay was written in 1991.

[1]Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (New York: Norton, 1971), p. 397; subsequent references are cited in the text.

quently and fruitfully for me and for others is the bildungsroman, and one might wonder what a shift from the bildungsroman to the family romance might open up for comparatist readers of this text and of other realist novels. This shift is meant to venture a response to recent revisions in feminist readings of *Jane Eyre*, for in the late 1980s and 1990s earlier celebrations of the novel's feminist rebelliousness have been seriously challenged and reformulated. Jane Lazarre's reading of Jane as the "rebel girl," Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's use of Brontë's representation of the woman writer as the "madwoman in the attic," Sandra Gilbert's reading of Jane as a female "pilgrim's progress," Adrienne Rich's demonstration of how successfully Jane overcomes the "temptations of a motherless daughter" all represent a specific moment in the practice of feminist reading, a moment that highlights individual achievement and psychological growth and development as unquestioned values for women.[2] More recently the novel has been cast instead as a portrait of a feminist individualist heroine whose marginality allows her to develop an oppositional discourse which *seem* to challenge but which actually *participates* in hegemonic ideology—Western, imperialist, racist, middle class, heterosexist, familial, psychological. Readings by Gayatri Spivak, Nancy Armstrong, and Mary Childers, among others, brilliantly explore the novel's blindnesses to its own collusions and "otherings."[3] Spivak's essay is especially pertinent in a comparatist framework, not only because it reads *Jane Eyre* against the background of European imperial expansion, but also because it confronts the nineteenth-century feminist individualism of the "marginal" Jane with the persona of the other, native, female subject. Spivak demands a comparatist reading that is fully cognizant of imperialism as the background for academic comparatism, and a feminist reading that reveals the problematic relationship between the feminist heroine and the "other" woman, her double or her victim.

Although I have found these essays illuminating, I am also concerned about how quickly they dismiss the novel's radical aspects, and with

[2]Jane Lazarre, "Charlotte's Web: Reading *Jane Eyre* over Time," in *Between Women*, ed. Carol Ascher, Louise de Salvo, and Sara Ruddick (Boston: Beacon, 1984); Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979); Adrienne Rich, "The Temptations of a Motherless Daughter," in *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence: Selected Prose, 1966–1978* (New York: Norton, 1979).

[3]Gayatri Spivak, "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism," *Critical Inquiry* 12.1 (Autumn 1985): 243–61; Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse, "Introduction: Representing Violence, or 'How the West Was Won,' " in *The Violence of Representation: Literature and the History of Violence* (New York: Routledge, 1989); Mary Childers, "Lady Monsters and Woman Servants," unpublished manuscript.

them the feminism of the 1970s for which *Jane Eyre* has come to stand. Here I agree with Cora Kaplan's suggestion that "Jane Eyre is in danger of displacing Bertha Mason as a new 'monstrous feminine'—the antitext of what eighties and nineties feminism should be."[4] Kaplan's strategy—reading the novel as a thematization of contemporary British politics, firmly rooted in its 1840s context, which reveals it to be anti-imperialist, though still racist and nationalist—is very different from Spivak's, and the two together can illustrate the distance between English department new historicism and a comparatist approach informed by the cultural critique of the 1980s. In what follows I confront the more recent revisionist critical readings of *Jane Eyre* with earlier approaches highlighting the novel's subversive strategies. I do this neither in order to reinscribe *Jane Eyre* into an unquestioned feminist or comparatist canon, nor so as to claim that *Jane Eyre* is unquestionably "radical," a term that, in itself, needs reflection and contextualization. My aim is to see how some "new" comparatist questions in feminist theory concerning race, class, and empire can relocate and redefine without totally displacing "older" concerns with family, identity, and authority. It is precisely a comparatist perspective that may be able to bring out points of connection between what has come to appear as two separate moves and two separate moments in feminist criticism and theory. *Family*, in my reading, functions as a nexus organizing a variety of issues in this family romance. In responding to both older and more recent feminist concerns (maternity/paternity and class issues in relation to work and authorship), such a reading tries to envision a mother-inclusive and class-conscious feminism as well as a gender, class, and race–conscious comparatist genre theory.

Family Romances

The "female family romance" model I have identified in nineteenth-century novels by women writers is based on Freud's notion of the *Familienroman* and the strange ways in which it echoes, by both repeating and distorting, the texts of nineteenth-century realism. In making this connection I assert my belief that Freud's analysis responds to the same cultural plots as nineteenth-century fiction, and that in a number of his essays he clarifies and elucidates not only those underlying cultural plots but also the very structures of the realist novel's presentation of individual development and familial fantasies. Predictably,

[4]Cora Kaplan, "Fostering 'Chartism and Rebellion': Race, Class, and Feminism in *Jane Eyre*," unpublished manuscript.

however, Freud is clearer on spelling out a male model, one that fits Balzac's Rastignac, Dickens's Pip, or Keller's Heinrich much more readily than Brontë's Jane; a female model has to be extrapolated from his essays and read back into and against the work of women writers. My analysis does not aim to privilege Freud's insights into female psychology. I read him as a reader of fictional plots which he brings out, elaborates, and reformulates into theory, or into theoretical fiction.

In spite of its Freudian source, the notion of the family romance, more than the notion of the bildungsroman, facilitates a consciousness of the intersections of textuality with gender, class, and race. The bildungsroman is concerned with the growth and development of the individual; its source is the bourgeois culture of eighteenth-century Germany, with its idealist belief in the perfectibility of the human spirit. Its focus, as critics have charged, is indeed individualist. Even though it places individual development in the context of familial and social structures, its goal is the formation of an integrated psychological and social subject. The critic who approaches a novel through the generic rubric of bildungsroman does risk psychologizing social, political, and economic issues. Not only have feminist redefinitions of the bildungsroman raised questions about the individualist goals of *Bildung* as the traditional genre defines them, but they have looked critically at the very notion of "individual." Feminist revisionist criticism, much of it comparatist in nature, has indeed redefined *Bildung* in ways that make it more attuned to women's lives and more congruent with female-authored texts. *Bildung*, in the eyes of feminist critics, is less child-centered, less aimed toward autonomy, more affiliative and relational. It needs to be contextualized and historicized; it needs to be confronted with the insights of feminist psychology. Even a redefined individuality, however, even an individuality that is inflected by the differences that gender makes in the social, cannot easily respond to the critiques of class, race, and imperial bias; it remains privileged and informed by first world middle-class values. In continuing to be a narrative of emancipation, it fosters certain relationships and certain aspects of individuality over others. We can see these values in the readings of *Jane Eyre* that were published in the 1970s and early 1980s, although not all of those readings were informed by generic criticism and the bildungsroman. They stressed friendship and sisterhood, nurturance and affiliation, care for others and care for self. But they also stressed individuality, self-reliance, self-preservation, choice, and self-expression.[5]

[5]For feminist studies of the bildungsroman, see Elizabeth Abel, Marianne Hirsch, and Elizabeth Langland, eds., *The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1983); Rita Felski, *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), chap. 4; and Susan Fraiman, *Unbecoming Women: British Women Writers and the Novel of Development* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

It may seem paradoxical that the notion of family romance, adapted from Freud and from feminist revisions of Freud, should offer a more satisfactory alternative to the bildungsroman as a generic lens through which to read women's fiction, yet I believe that for the nineteenth-century European novel it does. In Freud's terms, the *Familienroman* is still an individual interrogation of origins, one that embeds the engenderment of narrative within the structure of family. The family romance thus combines and reveals as indistinguishable the experience of family and the process of narrative. Precisely because the family romance is the *fantasied story* of the individual place within the family unit, it is alterable and manipulable, adaptable to varied circumstances. In fact, the individual ability to shift familial circumstance, to dream of alternatives, is the essence of the family romance. The narrating subject is but a member of the unit of family, and all of the relations within that unit impinge on his or her activity of fabulation. And, as those relations shift, so can the family romance: each life story is shaped by more than one familial fantasy. Fantasies might begin in childhood and be characteristic of childhood, but they can mature to adulthood; they can even concern aging and adult development. Objecting to the family romance construct from a feminist or Marxist perspective, one might argue that family is a unit that is inherently bourgeois and conservative; that it is the agent of the transmission of property and the safeguarding of values. One might argue as well that family, at least in the psychoanalytic narrative, is still first and foremost a psychological unit. Yet, even in the Freudian schema, family is what the individual wants to manipulate, to transform, and to escape. The constraints of family are precisely what motivates the desire for liberation, social transformation, even revolution. Thus, the generic rubric of family romance shows both the power that family holds as a hegemonic mythos in the period of nineteenth-century realism and the pain, even the violence, that any transformation of its traditional oedipal and patriarchal shapes can cause.

The fantasy of family is a fantasy of relationship; it can be a collective rather than a uniquely individual fantasy. Family, moreover, is a larger unit than the nuclear one; it includes extended kin relations, and even for Freud it included servants and governesses. The narrative of family is embedded in a narrative of class aspiration and economic fantasies of enrichment. And the character of patriarchal family relations is, in the family romance, applicable to other relations, whether they be in-

tergroup, international, or intercultural. Family structures can therefore be used as metaphors of colonial relations. I realize, however, as I adopt and adapt this model, that it remains problematic in a number of ways: it forces us to begin with Freud; it does continue to promote familial values even as it transforms and critiques them; it does weight the analysis toward the psychological even as it allows an expansion to the social and political. What is more, it reinforces the family as model and metaphor, whether positive or negative, for other forms of relation. Yet in doing so it merely reveals something that is indeed central to European realism. In spite of its problems, I believe that the generic rubric of family romance opens up certain aspects of nineteenth-century novels by women writers to scrutiny and to critique. It permits us to ask, for example, how Jane can combine the act of writing with the labor of maternity, and it permits us to see what desires shape Brontë's representation of her heroine's developmental course. It also permits us to see in a new light the transformations that Rochester undergoes in the novel. Tangentially, it permits us to evaluate anew the role of Bertha Mason and the novel's position on St. John's imperialist project. Yet I would propose this model not as transhistorically or cross-culturally valid but as applicable specifically to nineteenth-century European and American realism.

The nineteenth-century heroine's female family romance, as extrapolated from Freud, comprises three principal elements: (1) the condition of motherlessness and therefore the freedom to develop beyond the limitations of the maternal story and maternal transmission; (2) the replacement of maternal nurturance with a paternal/fraternal bond, which turns into a quasi-incestuous heterosexual romance/marriage, affording the heroine access to plot and to the symbolic; and (3) the avoidance of maternity, most often made possible by this conflation of husband with brother/father, and thereby the possibility of remaining in the plot.

For most nineteenth-century heroines maternal absence actually engenders feminine fictions. Plot demands the separation of heroines from the messages of powerlessness and disinheritance which mothers tend to transmit. Maternal stories are stories not to be repeated: from the perspective of fictional plot, mothers can only be examples not to be emulated. The somewhat unconventional though severely truncated story of Jane's mother provides an apt example. Adored by her brother, disowned by her family for making a "low" marriage to a penniless clergyman, she dies of the typhus fever he caught from the poor he visited in a large manufacturing town, leaving her daughter Jane to the care of her more conventional brother, Mr. Reed. In Mrs. Eyre's case

the break with her home and family embeds her in the economically based institution of marriage and motherhood, which proves to be fatal. She is the victim of the social constraints that delimit women's lives; but, from a different perspective, she has to die so that her daughter might have a story. The benefits of Jane's motherlessness are only confirmed by the other disastrous portraits of mothers the novel presents. Mrs. Reed, Céline Varens, Antoinetta Mason, even Mrs. Ingram turn out to be debilitating obstacles to their daughters' successful development. The earlier they are eliminated, the better chance their daughters have; the deeper the mother-daughter bond, the more devastating it proves to be. From contact with their mothers, daughters inherit madness, intemperance, and savagery at worst, incompetence and flightiness at best.

Freud's analysis in "Family Romances," however, implies that mothers need to be eliminated from feminine fictions for deeper reasons.[6] The family romance, as Freud describes it, provides for the developing individual a necessary escape from the "authority of his parents," and it is this conflict over authority and legitimacy which becomes the basis for fantasy and mythmaking. Read in conjunction with Marthe Robert's gloss, *Origins of the Novel*, Freud's essay becomes the paradigm for a more extensive theory of fiction making.[7] "Indeed, the whole process of society rests upon the opposition between successive generations," Freud asserts. Two stages define this process of liberation. First, the child, feeling slighted and in competition with siblings, and seeing that his parents are not unique and incomparable as he had at first supposed, imagines that he might be a stepchild or adopted. He frees himself from his parents by imaginatively replacing them with richer, more noble, aristocratic ones. Robert calls this the "foundling plot" and discusses it as the basis for the fantastic narratives and romances of Chrétien de Troyes, Cervantes, Hoffmann, Novalis, Melville, and Kafka. At this stage in his explanation of the "foundling fantasy," Freud introduces a gender distinction, arguing that "a boy is far more inclined to feel hostile impulses toward his father than toward his mother and has a far more intense desire to get free from *him* than from *her*. In this

[6]Sigmund Freud, "Family Romances" ("Der Familienroman der Neurotiker" [1908]), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey, 24 vols. (London: Hogarth, 1953), 9:237–41.

[7]Marthe Robert, *Origins of the Novel*, trans. Sacha Rabinowitch (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980). For another extensive discussion of the family romance as fictional genre, see Christine van Boheemen, *The Novel as Family Romance: Language, Gender, and Authority from Fielding to Joyce* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987). Robert does not consider gender as a category; van Boheemen includes a brief discussion on gender in her introduction.

respect the imagination of girls is apt to show itself much weaker."[8] For Freud, the fantasies surrounding the child's relation to his or her origin, and the rebellious refusal of parental authority, processes intimately connected to the creation of fiction, are more available to the boy because they are embedded in the conflicts over authority between father and son. Because the girl fails to participate in the struggle over authority, or in the anxiety over legitimacy, she evinces, in Freud's terms, a weaker imagination.

At the second stage of the family romance a beginning awareness of "the difference in the parts played by fathers and mothers in their sexual relations" begins to inform fantasy. When the child realizes that "*pater semper incertus est,* while the mother is *certissima,* the family romance undergoes a curious curtailment: it contents itself with exalting the child's father, but no longer casts any doubts on his maternal origin, which is regarded as something unalterable." The child's fantasies, Freud insists, become sexual at this stage and take the mother as sexual object. Freud suggests that they have "two principal aims, an erotic and an ambitious one."[9] Robert classifies this plot as the "bastard" plot—the origins of the realist fiction of Balzac, Dostoyevski, Tolstoy, Proust, Faulkner, Dickens. But because of the different roles mothers and fathers play in the process of reproduction, the father alone enters into the realm of fantasy while the mother remains firmly and certainly planted in reality, excluded from the process of "fictionalization." While imagination can alter her *status* and explore her *sexuality,* it cannot replace her *identity.* This "real" mother does become the object of the child's manipulative fantasy, which turns her into an adulteress, the agent of his own social elevation. Typically the mother falls in status while the father is elevated to royalty. Ultimately, the mother is no more than an instrument in the central drama between father and son. Men thus participate more directly in the plot of class aspiration, which is an inherent aspect of the family romance, while women have only a mediated access to class mobility.

Freud and Robert do not explore the gender asymmetry of this second model. If these daydreams and fantasies are the bases for creativity, what are the implications of this shift in the family romance for the girl, especially for the girl who also wants to develop her imagination and wants to write? If the mother's identity is certain, then the girl lacks the important opportunity to replace imaginatively the same-sex parent, a process on which, Freud's model insists, imagination and creativity depend. The father's presence, since his identity is uncertain, does not preclude fantasies of illegitimacy which can constitute a new self, free from familial and class constraints. The mother's presence, however, makes such fantasies impossible; therefore, we might extrapolate, in order to make possible the "opposition between successive generations" and to free the girl's imaginative play, the mother must be eliminated from the fiction. Yet even eliminating the mother from her plots cannot offer the girl a story that is parallel to the boy's: the drama of father and son, so fundamentally a conflict about authority and economic success in the public world, could never translate into a drama between mother and daughter. The girl's plot, if it is to have any import, must, like the boy's, revolve around the males in the family, who hold the keys to the power and ambition where plot resides.

Whereas the boy uses the mother as an instrument in the conflict with his father, however, and ultimately replaces his erotic fantasies with ambitious ones, the girl's fantasies revolve around the father in at once a more direct and a more conflicted manner. Since the father is *semper incertus,* the girl's heterosexual erotic relationships, unlike the boy's, are always potentially incestuous. *All* men are possible brothers, uncles, or fathers. Thus Freud's model implies that the danger of incest is more pronounced for the girl; the conditions for it lie at the basis of Freud's familial construction, making any marriage potentially incestuous, and, conversely, any father or brother a potentially safe erotic and sexual partner. In the female plot the father and his power *are* the object; what is more, fathers, brothers, uncles, and husbands are, in this particular psychic economy, interchangeable. Their precise *identity* is *semper incertus,* even as their *position* is forever desirable. Unlike the boy, who dreams of gaining authority by taking the father's place, the girl hopes to gain access to it by marrying him.

Thus, the "female family romance" implied in Freud's essay is founded on the elimination of the mother and the attachment to a husband/father. The feminine fiction then revolves not around the drama of same-sex parent-child relations but around marriage, which alone can place women's stories in a position of participating in the dynamics of power, authority, success, and legitimacy which constitute the plots of realist fiction. And in the marriage plot fathers, brothers, uncles, and husbands are conflated in complicated ways, and masculine representations often combine and modulate these roles.

Predictably, however, women writers do not simply hand over their heroines from mother to father/husband; they attempt to compensate for the loss of maternal nurturance by replacing the father with another man who offers an alternative to patriarchal power and dominance.

[8]Freud, "Family Romances," 238.
[9]Ibid., 239, 238.

Here is where women writers, to varying degrees, challenge the model implied in Freud's essay. I have understood the female fantasy that emerges from this will to difference in Adrienne Rich's terms as the fantasy of "the-man-who-would-understand,"[10] the man who, unlike a distant and authoritarian father, would combine maternal nurturance with paternal power. The male object, in this transformation of the marriage plot, takes the form of a "brother" or "uncle" who can be nurturing even as he provides access to the issues of legitimacy and authority central to plotting. Most important, perhaps, his fraternal, incestuous status can protect the heroine from becoming a mother and thereby can help her, in spite of the closure of marriage, to remain a subject, not to disappear from plot as the object of her child's fantasy. It is thus that women writers, in a gesture of resistance, attempt to revise a cultural plot leading, with certainty and inevitability, not only to marriage but most especially to maternity, a developmental plot Freud traces in his later essays, "Female Sexuality" and "Femininity." Here Freud asserts, of course, that mature femininity means not only the replacement of the mother with the father as libidinal object, but the replacement of the wish for a penis with a wish for a child. In resisting this developmental course, women writers offer their heroines an alternative direction—and the possibility of remaining in the plot.

Yet, whereas the male foundling and bastard fantasies revolve around the self and guarantee the hero's agency, the revisionary fantasy of the-man-who-would-understand revolves around the attachment to another person, and can at best promise only a mediated access to plotting. Moreover, the fraternal lover or husband ultimately offers the heroine a limited alternative to the father's patriarchal power. The fraternal marriage, even when it comes about, is at best a qualified solution to the heroine's desire for a continuing plot. In fact, although the fraternal man-who-would-understand cannot literally become the husband of the heroine's children, he most often eventually assumes a patriarchal power that may have been veiled but that certainly was not absent during the courtship plot.[11] He frequently has to be eliminated from the heroine's life so that she will be forced to determine her own course.[12] And although the heroine's childlessness does not necessarily offer a solution that ensures her survival and imaginative creativity,

[10]See Adrienne Rich, "Natural Resources," in *The Dream of a Common Language: Poems, 1974–1977* (New York: Norton, 1978).

[11]Jane Austen's *Emma* provides a good example; see my discussion of Mr. Knightley in *Mother-Daughter Plot*, 60–61.

[12]See, for example, Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*.

her course, we assume, would be insurmountably impeded by maternity.[13]

"My Seared Vision! My Crippled Strength!"

Jane Eyre appears to be the epitome of the family romance: the orphan child, raised in a hostile counterfamily, freed imaginatively to dream of alternative familial contexts, to transform those dreams into fictions and those fictions into autobiography. As she sits in her window seat, Jane dreams her way into the family, only to realize that she is "less than a servant," brutally and unfairly cast out of their midst. Yet her healthy sense of injustice, coupled with her firm knowledge of her legitimacy, with her class affiliation, and with her education—a security that appears to be unshakable, resistant even to abuse and confinement—enhances Jane's freedom to imagine as well as her ability to analyze her situation and to speak out assertively against it. With father and mother dead, then, and with this combination of class security, clear-cut mistreatment, and, later, her education, Jane can fantasize various family romances. Her fantastic analysis of her situation appears most vividly in the dream-paintings Rochester later so admires, paintings that give us an insight into her "inward eye" and the familial landscapes it can dream up (109–11). The first, a drowned female corpse whose arm sticks out of the water below a powerful cormorant who holds her gold bracelet is perhaps her dead mother, marked by the sign of economic security representing female victimization and masculine dominance. The second, a soft pastel female bust with stars in her hair and dark, wild eyes, is clearly an alternative maternal figure of her imagination, an angry mother-goddess perhaps. The third, a colossal diademed head with hollow, despairing eyes, draped in a dark turban, could represents a patriarchal specter whose power she challenges and whose vitality she removes: his ring is of white flame, and his sparkles have a lurid tinge.

Jane is motherless, and indeed Brontë replaces the mother with other parental figures. Jane is not unnurtured: Bessie, Miss Temple, Helen Burns, the memory of Mr. Reed all contribute to her relative psychic security, although none assumes an importance she cannot fantasize herself away from. She even enjoys the spiritual nurture of the moon, which appears to her on a number of occasions as an alternative pres-

[13]Kate Chopin's *Awakening*, ed. Margo Culley (New York: Norton, 1976), movingly illustrates this point.

ence to the Christian spirituality represented in the novel by St. John. Until we get to Rochester, the novel conforms perfectly to the female family romance pattern: Jane is an orphan; her father's family's economic status is uncertain, but her mother's identity and position is *certissima*. Even though she is told that she is less than a servant, she knows to assert her right to be treated as an individual, and her individuality is firmly upheld by the class allegiance she can claim through maternal certainty. In the Reed household, as well as later at school, at Thornfield, and at Marsh's End, Jane has the opportunity to fantasize various familial configurations that would improve her condition. Through those fantasies Jane develops the imagination that so characterizes her.

But in Brontë's novel Edward Rochester is not the fraternal man-who-would-understand. Although at their first encounter Rochester falls off his horse and relies on Jane's assistance, although he appeals for her help on other occasions, although he cross-dresses as the Gypsy, although he "understands" Jane down to her deepest spirit and she can assert that they are "equals" as her spirit addresses his spirit, although, in other words, the novel works hard to establish their mutual understanding and in some sense their equality, Rochester never for a moment relinquishes his masculine patriarchal power, never surrenders his sexual otherness. And even though his economic, experiential, sexual, and generational power is unambiguously established early in the novel, even though it is accepted by Jane, who calls herself his dependent and calls him "master," he uses every opportunity to bolster it even further. The Gypsy scene and his charade about the impending marriage to Miss Ingram are good examples of Rochester's shameless abuse of power and status and his distance from the persona of the fraternal lover. Rochester's secrecy, his insistence about dressing Jane, about transforming her as quickly as possible into Mrs. Rochester, the "iron grip" with which he hurries her to church all leave no doubt as to his distant and powerful masculinity and to Jane's "mistake" in her choice of partner, a mistake which his violent "marital" struggle with Bertha and his hubristic attempts to defy religious and state law only serve to underscore.

Whereas in other novels the fraternal lover eventually turns into the patriarchal husband, however, veiling his phallic power only then to display it with surprising force, Rochester actually travels an opposite course: with the loss of his eyesight and his limb, he also definitively loses the dominance which made him unworthy of marrying Jane. The physical disabilities caused by the fire at Thornfield are metaphors for the harsh and painful psychological and spiritual transformations he undergoes. At Ferndean he again and again reminds Jane of his dependence, his weakness, his "seared vision and crippled strength" (391). Jane rewards him by insisting: "I love you better now, when I can really be useful to you, than I did in your state of proud independence when you disdained every part but that of the giver and protector" (392). As she becomes the intermediary by which Rochester sees, feels, and interprets the world in and around him, Jane gains the power Rochester has lost: "He saw nature—he saw books through me; and never did I weary of gazing on his behalf, and of putting into words the effect of field, tree, town, river, cloud, sunbeam: never did I weary of reading to him" (397). They reverse roles, as she now teases him and makes him jealous of St. John. And she maintains full control of her story, to the point of keeping to herself, and to her reader, a crucial moment in her tale: her own participation in the supernatural between them reported by Rochester: "I listened to Mr. Rochester's narrative; but made no disclosure in return. The coincidence struck me as too awful and inexplicable to be communicated or discussed. If I told anything, my tale would be such as must necessarily make a profound impression on the mind of my hearer: and that mind . . . needed not the deeper shade of the supernatural. I kept these things then and pondered them in my heart" (394). Through these reversals, through Jane's increased control and authority, Rochester becomes the twin man-who-would-understand. "No woman was ever nearer to her mate than I am; ever more absolutely bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh" (396, 397).[14]

But unlike other fraternal husbands or lovers who become quasi-incestuous and thereby protect the heroine from maternity,[15] Rochester maintains enough distance and enough masculine potency literally to become the father of Jane's child. "His form was of the same strong and stalwart contour as ever: his port was still erect, his hair was still raven-black, nor were his features altered or sunk: not in one year's space, by any sorrow, could his athletic strength be quelled, or his vigorous prime blighted" (387). Rochester is a "caged eagle," a "royal eagle chained to a perch." And when he expresses openly his anxieties about his potency, Jane explicitly reassures him: "You are green and vigorous. Plants will grow about your roots, whether you ask them or

[14]For a different reading of Rochester's masculinity, see Jean Wyatt, *Reconstructing Desire: The Role of the Unconscious in Women's Reading and Writing* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990). Wyatt sees Rochester as providing for Jane a chance actually to marry the father and to experience a paternal nurturance that most women desire but cannot get.

[15]For example, Mr. Knightley, Heathcliff in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, and Benedict in George Sand's *Valentine*.

not, because they take delight in your bountiful shadow; and as they grow they will lean towards you, and wind around you, because your strength offers them so safe a prop" (391). This, we might say, is the ultimate fantasy of the man-who-would-understand. Characterizing the penis and not the phallus, Rochester's is a potency without oppressive patriarchal privilege. Whereas at Thornfield Rochester had to drag Jane to be married with an "iron grip," here at Ferndean he can humbly wait for "plants" to "wind around him" gladly and voluntarily, seeking his "safe prop" on their own.

Such potency is clearly dangerous, however. For Jane that danger lies in the fact that it arouses her sexuality, a condition which, as the representation of the sensual and sexual Bertha demonstrates, is frought with pitfalls. Its only possible redemption, maternity, is also a condition that cannot, in the context of this novel, or of Victorian fiction more generally, be either a welcome or a safe one. In order to confront this double danger and to find a course allowing its heroine's survival, *Jane Eyre* needs to reshape further the female family romance fantasy.

Dreaming of Children

"To dream of children was a sure sign of trouble, either to oneself or one's kin," Jane assures us as her obsessive dreams begin (193). She has learned this, like many other things, from Bessie and Miss Abbott, the servants at Gateshead, and, as much as the novel works hard at establishing Jane's difference from servant women, she does share with them this fear of birth and maternity. Jane dreams of children on two separate occasions: first, there is a week-long series of dreams preceding the call for a return to the Reed household. Next there are two dreams preceding her planned marriage, dreamt on the same night during which Rochester is away on a trip. These dreams are usually read as delayed expressions of Jane's unprocessed childhood anger and rage. Directed at her mistreatment and her dependency, the rage of the red room stays with her as an internal barrier separating her from the possibility of marriage and adulthood. It can be argued, however, that in these dreams of children Jane plays both the role of the child and the role of the caretaker, that she sees herself not only as the helpless child but also as its mother. And in the role of mother Jane is also helpless and alone. She associates her dreams with scenes of violence and death, all familial scenes such as Richard Mason's injury at the hands of his sister, and John Reed's suicide and his mother's illness. These scenes clarify the violence that resides within familial structures, exposing the

mother, in particular, to danger. The second two dreams, preceding Jane's "marriage," associate adult femininity and especially maternity with solitude, weariness, and peril. Jane feels the child to be a barrier between herself and Rochester. In both dreams she chases Rochester, but is impeded from catching up to him by the burden of the child. In both dreams he is free to leave for distant countries, or just to walk down the road, while she remains in charge of the wailing infant. And in the second dream she fails to protect the child; the wall on which she perches crumbles, and the child rolls off her knee. Her solitary maternity beomes lethal, for both mother and child.

It is at this point, as she awakens from this dream, or while still dreaming, that Jane encounters the mysterious monster Bertha, though the association of Bertha with the child dream was already established earlier. In previous readings Bertha was seen to represent a warning to Jane that she must overcome and repress her childhood rage lest she should wish to turn into the monstrous and uncontained bundle of passions which Bertha embodies, and which is reinforced by Bertha's Jamaican and Creole origins. If we read the dream as representing Jane's maternity and not her childhood anger, however, then what does the connection to Bertha mean? In this reading Bertha becomes for Jane an image of the reproduction of mothering. First, Bertha is, of course, the "infamous daughter of an infamous mother." She is also, by oedipal association, Rochester's wife, and therefore a maternal figure to Jane, a figure Jane must displace. Thus for Jane, as she imagines herself married to Rochester, and either a sexual adult woman or a mother, the rage of the red room comes back in the figure of Bertha, the married woman abandoned by her husband for her uncontrolled appetite, the woman who is doomed to repeat the mad life of her own mother. Jane's rage, then, is not the rage of the abandoned child but the rage of the abandoned adult woman who could never imagine combining sexuality and maternity, and for whom either course appears potentially ruinous. If we look at Grace Poole, Bertha's alternate persona, this association is borne out: Grace, the lone caretaker of her wailing, heavy, unpredictable charge, is the figure Jane invokes in her dream as she falls off the roof. Jane is both, of course, the neglectful caretaker and the neglected infant, both Grace and Bertha. Her unconscious anxiety and fear are aimed at the position of lone caretaker, at her sole responsibility for her own life and for the life of another who is dependent on her as she has been dependent on others.

These dreams of children are the underside of Jane's other familial fantasies, both the orphan fantasy and the fantasy of the man-who-would-understand. Whereas these are fantasies of freedom and result

in creativity, the other is a fantasy of confinement and destructiveness, a fantasy of both destroying and being destroyed. And yet, at the end of the novel Jane describes her firstborn. How does she circumvent the threats and dangers of motherhood? How does she combine maternity, sexuality, and creativity? I would suggest that the novel offsets the dreams of children and the disastrous maternal portraits they paint with more reassuring visions of what maternal work might entail. If she thinks back on her history, Jane will note that if she were to have children as Mrs. Rochester, she would not in fact be the one to care for them. She herself and her cousins are raised not by Mrs. Reed but by Bessie and Miss Abbott, who feed them, dress them, tell them stories, sing to them, and even administer moral lessons to them. Mrs. Reed might bear the reponsibility for overseeing their work and training them, but, like many Victorian fictional mothers, she acts overwhelmed and helpless, and she does not do the actual caretaking work. As in the Reed household, maternal functions are scattered throughout the novel, and, except in the case of the young Bessie charged with the infant Jane, and that of Grace Poole, women with whom Jane only very partially identifies, they never rest too firmly or burdensomely on a single woman.

Jane herself is cleverly protected from the worst parts of her own "maternal" work as a teacher or governess. When she teaches at Lowood, she has the leisure to paint her watercolors and do a lot of dreaming. When she is engaged as Adele's governess, she can always send her off to her nurse, or ask Mrs. Fairfax to take her. When Adele models her new dresses, for example, Jane, even while pretending to be present, does not pay attention. Rochester describes the scene thus: "I observed you . . . for half an hour, while you played with Adele in the gallery. . . . Adele claimed your outward attention for a while; yet I fancied your thoughts were elsewhere: but you were patient with her, my little Jane; you talked to her and amused her a long time. When at last she left you you lapsed at once into deep reverie . . . you paced gently on and dreamed" (275). Teaching Adele and playing with her need not interfere with Jane's dreaming, with her imaginative and creative activities. The same is true of her work as a schoolteacher at Marsh's End: Jane teaches but has the time and leisure to study with St. John. The duties of the governess or the teacher are not represented in the novel as a form of work that invades or threatens one's identity or interferes with one's creativity. Brontë uses Jane's roles as governess and teacher effectively to establish her dependence and marginality, but she also protects Jane from any deeper contamination by the world of work: her functions and investments remain as vague, diffused, and scattered throughout the novel as possible. And, surprisingly, this remains true as Jane moves up the class and economic ladder from pupil to governess, to teacher, and eventually to mother.

Brontë exploits the liminal position of the governess within the family, so brilliantly analyzed by Mary Poovey, and also what that liminality implies—the actual caretaking functions of servants.[16] Poovey distinguishes between the mother (the idealized unemployed) and the governess (who does for wages what the mother should be doing for free and who thereby destabilizes and threatens familial boundaries). We need to see, however, that the mother is after all employed: she supervises the household, including often very young servants and governesses. Although that work is different from the actual caretaking function of servants, it is work nevertheless.[17] We also need to distinguish the governess (who in this novel can move into the role of the "underemployed" mother, whose boundary from her is tenuous and can be crossed) from the servant (who cannot because she is separated by class). In this novel, then, as in other novels of the period, maternity is a threat not because of the work middle-class mothers do, for in fact the work of middle-class mothering is only tangentially related to the physical and emotional care of children. Maternity is a threat for other, deeper reasons of identity, and those reasons interestingly and subversively connect women of different classes and backgrounds. In fact, we best see the danger of maternity in the person of Grace Poole, the caretaker contaminated by her charge. Through most of the novel Grace *is* the insane woman on the third floor, who laughs, haunts, and stabs people. We see the danger of maternity in the Creole woman, Antoinetta Mason, who transmits her insanity to her daughter, and in the French woman, Céline Varens, who abandons her child to poverty rather than raise her. We see to what lengths Mrs. Reed goes to protect herself from these dangers of maternal contamination, by hiring servants and by adopting rigid principles of patriarchal Christian education, and ultimately how devastating and lethal her maternity proves to be nonetheless.

The dangers of maternity for Jane are most clearly manifested in her relation to St. John and in her response to his demands. Although he appears in the novel primarily as the fraternal patriarch, St. John's demands on Jane resemble a child's demands. Jane nearly loses herself in

[16]Mary Poovey, *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), esp. 126–63.

[17]I am indebted to Mary Childers for allowing me to read her unpublished analysis of the structure of work in Brontë's novel, which constitutes a fundamental disagreement with Poovey's reading.

a relation which is dictated by convention, which involves the bodily threat of contamination in the East, and which attracts her with a nearly irresistible compulsion. In all three respects this relationship resembles maternity. Opposed to her caretaking relation to Rochester, which is adult, mutual, and self-enriching rather than self-diminishing, her connection to St. John is profoundly endangering. The investment in maternity as identity is akin to Jane's investment in St. John, threatening the loss of the self Jane so firmly knows she has to take care of herself. But in this novel Brontë begins to redefine the shapes of maternal work and identity in such a way as to propose it as a viable possibility for Jane.

The Reproduction of Fathering

"He would send for the baby; though I entreated him rather to put it out to nurse and pay for its maintenance. I hated it the first time I set my eyes on it—a sickly, whining, pining thing! It would wail in its cradle all night long—not screaming heartily like any other child, but whimpering and moaning. Reed pitied it; and he used to nurse it and notice it as if it had been his own: more, indeed, than he ever noticed his own at that age. . . . In his last illness, he had it brought continually to his bedside" (203, 204). This account of Jane's infancy by the dying Mrs. Reed clarifies aspects of the family romance plot and Brontë's transformations of it. As Mr. Reed adopts Jane, and attempts to get his wife to promise to take care of her, the illegitimate family is made legitimate, thereby restoring his incestuous bond with his sister, broken by her marriage. The account is especially striking, however, because, except for Jane's dream, it is the novel's only account of actual nurturing behavior. Consoling a wailing child, in waking life, is left to a man, an uncle. This differs from but is related to other paternal and avuncular acts in the novel: Rochester's adoption of Adele, whom he does not like but pities enough to provide for her and raise her in his house; Mr. Eyre's intervention on behalf of Jane, also financial and moral, though not directly physical; to a much lesser degree the nurturing presence and moral intervention of Mr. Lloyd on behalf of Jane; and St. John's intervention to rescue Jane from the threshold of death on the moors.

These acts of paternal nurturance are powerful enough in the novel to threaten Mrs. Reed utterly. She fails to keep her promise to Mr. Reed, a promise that would extend his protection of his niece beyond his death. She cannot bear to help Mr. Eyre establish a connection with

Jane and reports her dead. What does she have to gain from this lie, which follows her to her grave? Nothing but to circumvent a form of relation she perceives as more powerful than any other: the connection between uncle and niece, a connection that can "lift [Jane] to prosperity" (210) and legitimacy within the family, and can move her firmly into the space of plot.

In sending Jane to Lowood, Mrs. Reed substitutes a different, a dominant, authoritarian and patriarchal form of paternity, Mr. Brocklehurst's domineering and oppressive child rearing practices, for Mr. Reed's nurturing care. Lowood is designed to control and contain all aspects of feminine desire, all female appetite, whether it be for food, material possessions, pleasure, imaginative play, or even knowledge exceeding the conventional canon of acceptability. Body, intellect, soul, and will have to be regimented and regulated to become smooth instruments of the reproduction of traditional values and norms. All passion needs painfully to be eliminated through humiliation and correction. Brocklehurst's authoritarian power is echoed later in the novel by St. John and his mission, associated in the novel with institutionalized Christianity. St. John functions both as Jane's demanding child and as an exacting father, much more than as the brother, as she and he want to define their relation:

> By degrees, he acquired a certain influence over me that took away my liberty of mind: his praise and notice were more restraining than his indifference. I could no longer talk or laugh freely when he was by, because a tiresomely importunate instinct reminded me that vivacity . . . was distasteful to him. I was so fully aware that only serious moods and occupations were acceptable, that in his presence every effort to sustain or follow any other became vain: I fell under a freezing spell. When he said "go," I went; "come," I came; "do this," I did it. But I did not love my servitude. (354)

Marriage to such a man is lethal: "If I were to marry you, you would kill me. You are killing me now" (363), Jane insists, realizing that St. John represents the opposite of sensual desire or sexual passion and that marital relation should not be based on such thorough repression of desire and the body.

St. John's protective and repressive paternal functions extend not only over Jane and the rest of his family but also over "his race." The manner in which St. John works for humanity is distinctly paternal and patriarchal: "Firm, faithful, and devoted; full of energy, and zeal, and truth, he labors for his race: he clears their painful way to improvement:

he hews down like a giant the prejudices of creed and caste that encumber it. He may be stern; he may be exacting: he may be ambitious yet; . . . but his is the ambition of the high master-spirit, which aims to fill a place in the first rank of those who are redeemed from the earth" (398). As "master" and father, St. John inserts himself in an apostolic line of sons and fathers, beginning with Jesus and God. This is St. John's authoritarian paternity, a paternity the novel sharply and definitively contrasts to another form of refigured paternity—that of Mr. Reed, Mr. Lloyd, Mr. Eyre, and Edward Rochester. As it reshapes paternity, the novel also distances itself from the patriarchal and imperialist civilizing mission St. John undertakes on behalf of "his race." With the critique of Brocklehurst's and St. John's paternity, the novel wants to imagine a different form of spiritual content and relation, one that is perhaps best approximated by the communication Jane achieves with the moon, or the supernatural "conversation" she has with Rochester. These are both based on a deep empathy rather than on the need to improve or correct.

Rochester is the agent of the novel's refigured paternity. From the protector of Adele who does not like children, Rochester turns into the father who hold his child in his arms and stares into his eyes. With his vulnerability Rochester gains in nurturance, and as we have seen, his nurturance is enriched by his potency. This male nurturance, built up in the novel through the figures of Reed, Lloyd, and Eyre, makes it possible for Jane to become a mother and not to claim her child but to hand it over, instead, directly to its father. In developing, ever so suggestively, Rochester's redeemed paternity, Brontë adds another dimension to the female family romance. For Rochester is a different paternal figure from the other fathers in the novel. He has money like Mr. Eyre and Mr. Reed, but he lacks the moral authority of Mr. Lloyd, and, most important, he lacks the relation to the symbolic that all three share. That contact the novel reserves for Jane: "He cannot read or write much; but he can find his way without being led by the hand: the sky is no longer a blank to him—the earth no longer a void." Whereas the other three nurturing paternal figures remain distant, disembodied, benevolent, Rochester is definitively embodied in his disability. He describes himself as a "sightless block," insisting: " 'On this arm I have neither hand nor nails,' he said drawing the mutilated limb from his breast, and showing it to me. 'It is a mere stump and ghastly sight' " (384). Thus embodied, thus responsible for earth and sky and not for books, holding his child in his arms, Rochester differs both from the authoritarian/authoritative and from the nurturing fathers. He is, and the novel suggests this ever so subtly, the "male mother," whose nurturance, obviously relieved by the caretaking work of servants and governesses, could free Jane to continue her imaginative labor and to write her story. This male mother is the figure Jane chased after in her dreams; this is the parent, the partner fantasized in an adult female family romance. He is both dependent and to be depended upon; he is weak and also strong. He is the embodied father, the vulnerable father, the humble father.

Why, however, is Jane's "firstborn," the only child she mentions in the novel, a boy? Why, like most other nineteenth-century heroines, is Jane unable to reproduce herself? Why does the novel displace a reproduction of daughters?[18] Does the novel still fear the daughter-father bond, a bond always profoundly threatening to both mothers and daughters, and especially so if the father is nurturing as well as powerful? Does Jane fear it because of its seductions, its threats of incest and daughterly exchange? Or does she, like Mrs. Reed, fear it because it would exclude her as a mother from a bond she can never equal for her daughters? Or is it, conversely, that in highlighting the son's mirroring moment with a male rather than a female "mother" ("he could see that the boy had inherited his own eyes, as they once were—large, brilliant and black"), Brontë envisions a "reproduction of fathering" which becomes a "male mothering" and a different masculinity? If this last is true, then the novel even more radically distances itself from St. John's patriarchal Christian imperialist vision, outlined contiguously to it in the text. Linking these two visions of fathering, St. John's paternity and Rochester's male maternity, is Rochester's acknowledgment of a God who had "tempered judgment with mercy" (397) and Jane's happy picture of an extended egalitarian family connected through the sisterhood of Jane, Diana, and Mary, a sisterhood that thrives in the absence of the brother, St. John. This family successfully functions within the law because, as far as the novel reveals, it is not tested: Rochester's son is his "firstborn," but we are not privy to whatever conflict over inheritance and exchange might threaten to reproduce the disastrous familial situations of Jane and Rochester's own families of origin.

It seems, moreover, that although this family romance fantasizes a way of reproducing and changing the father, to the point of casting him as a male mother, it still cannot reproduce female mothering or a female line of transmission. Here it reaches one limit of its radical potential. No legitimate daughter is mentioned in the novel; Adele is

[18]Some novels allow the heroine an indirect form of reproduction, through a niece or the child of a friend, but never a direct one. See the little niece Valentine at the end of Sand's *Valentine*, and the little Emma, daughter of Miss Taylor, at the end of Austen's *Emma*.

rather cleverly removed from the family; and Jane never herself adopts a maternal voice. The story she writes, like the pictures she draws, keeps her firmly intricated in her infantile identity and in her own uniqueness and unreproducibility. And although her family romance fantasies do mature to adulthood, they stop short of detailing a vision of herself as a mother who is also a sexual woman and a writer.

If Jane is able to write, if she is able to appropriate from Rochester the access to the symbolic, she may be able do so in spite of being a mother, but she cannot do so *as a mother.* Jane's family romances have transcended the individualist bildungsroman by refiguring masculinity as well as femininity, and by situating individual development in the midst of pressing social, economic, and historical issues of class and empire which shape and reshape the story of *Bildung.* Yet Jane as narrator does remain the separating daughter, the abused and neglected rebel child. It is as daughter and as rebel child, in fact, that she continues to appeal to contemporary feminist readings, whether those readings are celebratory or critical. Although she can envision a male mother who can transmit to his son the contact with the earth and the sky, Brontë is unable to envision a female mother who can write her story in a maternal voice, who can write about the mother and the daughter in the different family romance she fantasizes.[19] Jane's limited ability to adopt the perspective of maternity and adulthood also limits the range of the family romances she can fantasize and enact.

Nor does *Jane Eyre* enable us to step out of the bounds of the familial, and here is where the family romance paradigm reveals both its strengths and its limitations of view. At the end of her plot Jane is firmly based in the new and admittedly renewed family she has forged. The setting of her familial life is inauspicious: Ferndean is Rochester's least attractive property, deemed too damp and unhealthy even to house the mad Bertha. Other than Diana, Mary, and their husbands and children, the Rochesters seem to associate with no one; whatever familial transformation Brontë was able to envision had to remain utopian and limited in scale. Yet the bases of the envisioned transformations also had to remain unexamined. As a new family consolidates itself, it practices its own blindness and exclusions. Adele comes dangerously close to repeating the status of Jane in the Reed household; her removal from the family seems to be rather cruel. Jane's status in her new family is ensured by the financial security she achieves by means of her uncle's colonial possessions, though this source is never

[19]In *Mother-Daughter Plot* I reflect in more detail on the absence of maternal perspectives in women's fiction, expecially in nineteenth-century realism. See esp. chaps. 1–3.

questioned in the space of the text. Rochester's transformation is made possible, however painfully, by Bertha's convenient death and her destruction of their tainted past life. St. John himself, moreover, is excluded from the fold of his metropolitan family and left to absorb the colonial guilt and the civilizing labor which actually facilitate the family's consolidation on both economic and moral grounds. As much as they allow for revision and manipulation, familial fantasies and the family romance paradigm which enables us to analyze them continue to perpetuate structures separating inside from outside which may well be basic to the realist novel. And even as a feminist revision of the family romance allows us to perceive these structures, it does not allow us to step outside them.