Rearranging the Room:
An Adaptation of *Jane Eyre* with Afterword

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Abstract

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Intertextual adaptation, as opposed to screen adaptation, is impossible to contain within any one school of critical thought. It defies the anxieties of structuralism, contests the bounds of reader-response and reception theory, and challenges the urges of postcritique, contextualism, and intentionalism. Yet this has left adaptation at the whims of power dynamics inherent to (Western) literary theory and criticism. Critics—creative writers themselves, or not—habitually sideline the importance of adaptation and transformative generative process. Writing an adaptation is itself an act of criticism, simultaneously a resistance and application of theory embodied, experienced, exposed. This thesis thus seeks not to argue conscious authorial intent as requisite to literary criticism, but to demonstrate the inextricability of authorial resonance and process as made undeniable by the act of adaptation: here, a short story *Jane Eyre* adaptation with an afterword addressing methodology and a sampling of possible critical readings.

table of contents

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part one — short story

Rochester

It was a Ministry of Occult Occurrences lecture at which he first fell into my sight, a little sprite himself ghosting along the room panels in the rear, eagerly if not restively awaiting the cessation of speeches and subsequent transmission to the adjacent presentation room. Many in the crowd, really—ladies in fine hats and full skirts, gentlemen fidgeting with pocket-watches and cuff-links—were all growing restless, especially as a sceptic in the front row entered a veritable quarrel with one of the Occult scholars about the distinction between Spiritism and Spiritualism.

'Pardon—' came a sudden voice, surprisingly assertive for its velveteen timbre, never mind its nearness to my person despite addressing all in the room: 'But shall we move on to the Medium soon, or are we to suffer through these pontifications all night?'

The whole of the room quieted with a ripple of glances our way—that sprite-ish little man and myself, assumed involved simply for existing, quite innocently, in his orbit.

Perhaps I should not say 'innocently.' I, too, was growing impatient with the delay; I'd fought for invitation to observe the Clairvoyant work of the Medium, not play audience to an intellectual sound-off. If I'd wanted a fist-to-cuff, I'd have placed bets on the week's boxing.

And I, too, peered at this young man with a mixture of shock and admiration: admiration for his speaking up, and shock for this, too; but shock, mainly, to recognise he was sprite-like due to his youthfulness, or just his youth, being perhaps less years my junior than fingers on one hand. I myself, being only twenty and three.

'Ah—' The crowd's attention volleyed back to the front of the room, where the Ministry's main lecturer was ruffled and a bit embarrassed. '—why, yes—' Here he checked his pocket-watch as if

needing any evidence to support the obvious. 'Yes, we should proceed, then. Thank you for your vigilance, Mr.—?'

The young man nodded, yet seeming suddenly quite discomfited by the audience's gaze returning to him, spoke more to the ceiling than to the scholar as he answered: 'Mr. Rochester.'

Mr. Rochester, despite still smelling of roseblossoms and dew, knew quite a lot more on the Occult than perhaps anyone at the Ministry's lecture might have supposed—this depth of knowledge being one I discovered after the lecture, in the smoking room.

Something in me twinged nervously to approach him where he lingered alone peering into the fire, as if intent on some image in the flame like in a scryer's mirror. There, unperturbed on the periphery by others' conversation and laughter and debates—all manner of elbows knocking, from the Psychical Research to the London Alliance, Ministry of Occult Occurrences and London Society of Mediums—I manoeuvred my drink and cigarette into one hand and offered the other to shake.

'Mr. Rochester?' I greeted.

He stirred instantly, eyes flickering up to mine—dark, but softly so, and seeming very capable of intense feeling though to-night they were congenial. He took my hand, and shook it. 'Yes,' he said. 'And you?'

'Mr. John Sallow,' I replied.

'Sallow would seem quite the opposite of your complexion and general constitution.'

'Indeed. I have the honour of its mediæval meaning of a willow tree, that mythical witch's twig.'

A smile plucked at one corner of his mouth. I fumbled in my breast-pocket, finally managing under his watchful gaze to procure my silver cigarette-case and offer it to him. Once he'd struck the match and lit it, he tossed the stick of it down into the fire and said with a sigh, 'I'm rather disappointed in the Medium to-night.'

'Oh? And why so?'

‘Why,’ here young Mr. Rochester’s voice took such a hardness, it startled me, ‘she was two table knocks away from being a fraud. That spirit-board blathered nonsense. I expected much more after the lecture on a Clairvoyant’s inherent Mesmerism. Didn’t you?’

I was relieved and quite exhilarated, as the passion in his utterance proved he was no sceptic but a believer who too felt mocked to-night: ‘Yes, I agree with you! She did not even know her catalogue of spirits.’

‘Residual spirits do not *communicate*. They simply echo their living days, like if a photograph were to suddenly move.’

‘Yes, if she made contact with anything to-night, surely it was an Enigma.’

‘Could the Ministry not instead have organised a lecture by any of their Inspectors? A presentation on Electro-Static ambience, or their methods of investigating, at the very least.’

I nearly spat out my entire cigarette, I so hastened to say, ‘You are interested in spectral investigation?’

‘Ghost-hunting,’ Mr. Rochester concurred.

‘I’ve been reading for my admittance to the Ministry,’ said I.

Mr. Rochester fixed me then with those dark, depthless eyes, in a way that made me feel rather exposed. He smoked, slowly, delicately, squinting at me a moment, before he asked in a rather shy manner: ‘Would you like to visit a haunted house, Mr. Sallow?'

Reader, I admit I did not at first oblige.

‘James,’ young Mr. Rochester introduced himself fully on the pedimented portico, where we had recognised one another a second night at a Table Knocking Gala. ‘And if I may call you Jackie, John Sallow, you may call me Jem.’

‘Right, then, Jem,’ I replied. ‘Shall we see one another at every Spiritualist gathering in town?’

‘Well, perhaps; I am here with my cousin for the Season. Say, Jackie, have you ever been to a dinner party in Chelsea?’

After this artist's get-together in a town-house near the embankment: 'Shall we go to Herbert and Handel's?' And following an evening at this aforementioned playhouse: 'There is an exhibit of haunted artefacts at the Ministry to-morrow night.' Then: 'Have you been to the menagerist's on Fleet Street?' Subsequently: 'A séance in Berkeley Square?'

Yes, Mr. Rochester was twenty years old, nearly of financial majority: he was wildly intrigued by Clairvoyance and the science of the spectral; he enjoyed boating and walks in Kew Gardens when it rained; he had never been to Paris, but his sister was born there, and he was quite good at Whist and his mother had loved birds, which was why the bird-headed marionette at the Fleet Street menagerist's pleased him so.

'My sister and I live alone,' he hinted.

'Ferndean's really a magnificent house, though old,' he hummed around a borrowed cheroot.

'Would you like to visit a haunted house, Mr. Sallow?' he asked once more as we dodged the splash from an omnibus near Waterloo Bridge.

And it was not that I was disinclined, but because I was, embarrassingly, nervous to be around him where I might have no distraction or diversion from how madly appealing I found him. He could never find out how he pounded my pulse, how I wondered if he already knew, judging by the occasional coy and curious glance. From event to event, to the slim shape of his face and the flicker of his lashes when he laughed in the sparkle of a low-lit room—a secretive quality about him, somehow seeming both full of vigour yet somehow plain, at once on the precipice of either leaping up with a shout or sliding out of view. Soft, and brooding, yet brilliant as his intellect—and the distinct impression he would not relent until he achieved what he wanted.

Again, and again he asked me: 'Would you like to visit a haunted house, Mr. Sallow?'

Under the painted sign of Herbert and Handel's Theatre, I finally conceded: yes. I very much dreamed of visiting a haunted house.

The village-folk at the coach-houses 'warned' me Ferndean was a queer place—not only isolated, but peculiar. That the estate had experienced merely a short season of liveliness before the gloom that seemed to curse the Rochester name descended upon it once more.

Indeed, when finally coming up on the gravel and grass-plat—after near-oppressive clusters of deep, watchful wood, hoar and swooped branch scraping at the coach, and the passage through stone-pillared iron gates like entering a crypt—there was a sense of drear that seemed to thrive in the secluded grey light of a damp afternoon as mould does in a cellar pantry. My heartbeat stirred in my veins: the sense of austere and ancient sadness about the manor-house in its little nook of forest thrilled me. I was no Clairvoyant, but a scholar—aspiring—and, perhaps selfishly, hoped an observation, of my own volition, of this supposedly 'haunted' hall, would prove an attractive mark in my application to the Ministry of Occult Occurrences.

At the narrow front door, young Mr. Rochester and a lady in fine, high-necked lace received me: he, Waterhouse's Hylas, and she with a severity clasping her face as firm as her fingers, which seemed unnatural to her soft blonde curls and full, rosy mouth.

'Mr. Sallow,' young Mr. Rochester greeted me, while a servant rickety and slumped himself as a mossy gate-post soon to give way, shuffled off with my few belongings. 'This is my half-sister, Mademoiselle Adèle Rochester.'

'Via adoption.' Miss Adèle's lashes beat twice like a butterfly's wings; her voice, syrupy with well-girdled French accent. 'No blood relation at all.'

I bobbed my head in silent greeting.

'But you must be exhausted,' Miss Adèle insisted. 'It's a hellish journey from London to Ferndean. Through one of Dante's circles to another, another and another until you're here. Come, inside. Miss Fairfax will fetch you some refreshment.'

By the light of the fire in a parlour that seemed as though still mid-arrangement—heavy sashes pulled forward to conceal half the room; a number of chairs which seemed quite cold and unused; one

sideboard with a few decorative figurines—I explained my visit to Miss Adèle, who received the introduction with that same pucker of the once-cherubic features.

'Oh, lovely,' came her first response: 'Another John.'

Miss Fairfax, a mousy little thing with thin plaits and thin wrists and a thin, watery look to her eyes that produced the appearance of being much more tired than her young frame should have been, swept in with fresh tea.

I nodded as if I had any comprehension what Miss Adèle intimated; her bitterness suggested something about my person unpleasant, indeed disagreeable. But I had taken great pains to tame my blond cowlicks, and powder under my arms and clean my nails and attend to every other corner of the wash-stand. By all accounts, I felt I looked every bit the respectable gentleman. At least: I had never been regarded as so unpleasant in all my life.

'Yes.' I was a bit flustered. 'John Sallow, Mademoiselle.' (Mr. Rochester had informed me she preferred this form of address.) 'I am a Spiritualist—that is, I've been studying the occult and spectral occurrences for a few years now—'

'A few years?' Miss Adèle tittered. '*Mon Dieu*, you're but *un enfant* yourself, like my brother here. You've still got the plump of it around your jaw. And a Spiritualist already?'

I cleared my throat, suddenly quite self-conscious under the gaze of a woman seven years my senior: indeed, Miss Adèle had a way of making one feel small and silly. My ears burned. 'Yes, Mademoiselle. As I said, I've been studying the spectral science for some time, and Mr. Rochester and I happened to meet at an event where we fell into conversation on the topic. He invited me to stay on for a few days.'

Miss Adèle's large blue eyes drifted around the parlour until they met her brother's, where he sat back on a chaise-lounge fiddling with the tassels of a cushion.

'Did he?' she hummed.

'From what I understand,' I went on, 'Ferndean suffers from some unexplainable phenomena.'

'It does,' Miss Adèle hummed again, tight and flat. 'I see. You've been solicited, then, by my brother? To investigate these phenomena?'

Again, the heat in my face: it felt a lie to confirm, as true investigation was not my official capacity. Not yet. Still I said, 'I suppose so.'

'And here,' Miss Adèle's face dimpled in such a poignant way, 'I thought Jem was finally making friends.'

Mr. Rochester stood suddenly from his seat, adjusting his sleeves and the front of his waistcoat as he announced: 'I shall give him a tour. Come, Mr. Sallow. Miss Fairfax, a light, please.'

The interior of Ferndean seemed a perfect breeding ground for ghost stories. The manor-house being old, large but not expansive, and scarcely populated, gave a sentience to the dim hush that crept along with one down shadowy corridors, over whining floorboards, past Schloss Green walls. Most rooms were unlit, mantles cold and black, with pale daylight prying at the edges of the drapes.

'Here.' Our first stop on the tour was a modest, musty library. Mr. Rochester dusted a small table off and set the light down so he might gesticulate with both hands. 'On the walls, knocking, and scraping. As if massive rodents have nested, and created veritable Roman roadways from floor to ceiling. All through the house, though this room is the loudest. Come.' And taking up the light again, we moved down the hall guided by his small gestures. 'Things will go missing: you will find a book or a trinket in a room in which you have not trespassed a day or more.'

'Does it all happen regularly?' I inquired.

'Quite. I would say no month has ever gone by without at least *one* strange incident.'

My heart gave a small lurch: seemed to soar and sink simultaneously. Imagine the report that would come of this manor-house!

The next stop was a stairwell, which turned in three sharp landings to the upper storey. The candlelight softened young Mr. Rochester's face. 'Sounds on these stairs, as if something drags itself up and down and up again. Thump, thump, thump. And—a few times, when I was small—I have seen a swift figure peering down from that top landing.'

My soul went cold. 'You mean this has occurred all your life?' I pressed.

Young Mr. Rochester turned those round, dark eyes to me, and so plainly replied: 'Why, mostly.'

We climbed the stairs. I confess the hair all along my neck and arms stood up, chill and static-charged. But what if the figure appeared? And how could young Mr. Rochester be so cool and composed about it? What was I doing here, I, who had barely experienced anything at all in my pathetically normal life, now myself in the halls of a haunted manor-house with a young man who had communed with the phantasmal for all his existence?

The nursery was down the hall, cramped and stale with lace and abandoned childhood. 'Here.' young Mr. Rochester said, 'after my mother passed, I would hear her voice still. As I slept in that crib there, I dreamt I saw her figure drifting about in the dark.'

Stepping back into the hall, our next stop: he lifted a hand and with a lily-white finger pointed to the door at the end of the corridor. 'The stair to the uppermost storey. I believe Miss Fairfax alone has the key; I can't be sure. But every time I have seen the door ajar, my soul has frozen in my body with fear. I have never gone up the stairs. I simply cannot will my feet to tread upon them.'

Last was the red-room. He knew the eerie beauty of it stunned me, and first let me quietly revere it: the high crystal knob, the dusty velvet and faded satin, brocade and mahogany four-poster, watercolour hangings, a narrow door half-hidden behind a bookcase.

'What is that door?' I asked.

'Unused, at any rate,' young Mr. Rochester sighed. 'None of the keys work on it. But I have seen the knob turn. You will have to let me know if it happens for you.'

'Pardon?'

He smiled up at me. 'Why, this is the only guest room done up at the moment, Jackie.'

Supper was another peculiar function. After I'd made myself comfortable in this guest room, still cold despite the first fire in questionably decades, checked and rechecked my appearance and state of person

that I might be respected even as *l'enfant*, as which Miss Adèle viewed me, and spent an hour or so perusing my books with mild self-doubt, I washed once more and descended to the dining hall.

It was not an expansive room, but for its minimal furnishings it appeared enormous. Miss Adèle took her meal upstairs. I made mental note of the general want for lamps in the house: the jumping shadows of candlelight could very well produce an experience of 'seeing swift figures.' The menu was unpretentious, but very pleasant, the lone butler attending to us wordlessly.

'I hope my sister's absence is not too upsetting,' young Mr. Rochester announced. 'It's not an insult, really.'

I smiled faintly. An insult? No: I was rather relieved.

'She and I are not blood-related, as she was eager to assert,' he went on: 'My father was her adoptive father, and my mother the same. Her true mother was a French actress. Her father, some unknown beau.'

'How horrible.'

'Yes, she went away to school after I was born. I believe she resents me for having to return to this desolate house. In my father's last days, he begged her stay with me until I may access family assets myself. I won't receive inheritance annually until I am twenty-one, next year.' He paused, squinted at me in the candlelight. 'She is right, by the by. Look in the mirror: you're young, Jackie. Don't get stiff in the collar yet.'

I was flustered, and flattered, and startled by the butler materialising seemingly from nothingness to change my dishes.

'What do you do, Jack?' young Mr. Rochester inquired.

'I produce translations,' I replied. 'German, mostly, sometimes Latin or Greek.'

'You attended university, then?'

'No, no. I did not. I was fortunate to have a tutor who emphasised the magic of languages.'

'What emphasised the magic of the preternatural for you, Jackie?'

For a moment there was nothing but the uneasy hush of the house. The crackle of candle wick—the hover of shadow and that old servant's occasional shifting—outside the latticed windows, an evening gale which had begun to filter through the surrounding wood.

'I think,' I said then, 'that I had a rather uneventful life with regard to personal experience with the phantasmal, but after my brother died by his own hand, I became rather interested in it all.'

The look of anguish which stamped itself across young Mr. Rochester's face was at once heartening yet mortifying: I did not want pity for it; I did not want the mark of my brother's mania on my character. Yet, somehow, that sorrow on the young man's face held also the gleam of curiosity, and although it seemed to objectify me, it was a release.

'Do you play piano, Jack?' Mr. Rochester asked then, perking up. 'If so, I should certainly show you the music room before you set up for the night.'

—

18—:

Night One. Observations: natural ambient noise (wind; floors; servants; structural integrity); windows on first and second storey rattle frequently; no lamps: candlelight cause of 'shadow sightings' (?); wood animals: echoes may produce mistake of 'dis-embodied voice.'

18—:

Night Two. Performed a 'call and answer' experiment, modeled after the Ministry of Occult Occurrences spectral inspection guidelines. Nothing out of the ordinary. Discovered cross-draft in west wing which might account for doors opening and closing of their own accord.

18—:

Night Three. Experienced a knocking above my head when retiring to sleep. Knocked back per guidelines. No response.

—

18—:

Night Four. I have attempted lodestones, bells, table knocking, and the ambient compass but still nothing. I am beginning to think perhaps this is a lost cause: either the phantom will not show itself, or I am an over-ambitious amateur. One door slam but when I set chase, it was merely Miss Fairfax at the stair to which only she holds the key.

18—:

Night Six. I write frantically so as to record it all before I lose any detail: SOMETHING HAS HAPPENED! I confess as I sat alone in the drawing room, endeavouring against exhaustion and the urge to return home, I was roused by the sound of gentle footsteps down the hall. 'Hallo?' I called. And, Reader: A VOICE RESPONDED! It was not of this plane: I tell you, it matched theory in that it was warbling and distanced, restricted on that spectrum of octave only available to the spectral by manifesting Electro-Static energy. 'Hallo!' I called again. 'GOOD EVENING,' the voice replied, as if it were just around the corner. I leapt to my feet. And just as I rounded the corner into the hall, I saw in the shadows further down, someone rounding the opposite way and disappearing from view. A feminine form, near transparent, rather fairy-like in her un-frail petiteness. And that is that! This was my experience!

I shall ask if I might stay another week, longer if necessary. I did bring some work; I shall translate during the day so as to not fall behind in deadlines.

—

With a bright smile, young Mr. Rochester granted my petition to stay on another fortnight. Mademoiselle's slant of a glance spoke of deep displeasure with the decision; she may as well have ordered me gone for the spleen of that look. But she did not argue. Still, it gave the distinct feel of a sceptic, an embittered woman merely humouring her brother's fancies.

I became quickly and quietly accustomed to the off-tempo clockwork of the house, the stuttering cogs: of meals at which Miss Adèle either recused herself or peered at me narrowly over her beverage; chatty and relaxing walks around the small grounds with Mr. Rochester; then busy at translation work, designing new approaches to my observation of Ferndean, or compiling a journal of sorts to accompany my findings. In the nights, I wandered the halls chronicling any strange thing that occurred, and attempting to make communications by asking questions of the dark: Who is here? Spirit, if there is one, knock three times here? Was it you I heard and saw the other night? &c. and &c. Young Mr. Rochester occasionally wandered alongside me, a keen little apprentice. Sporadically Miss Adèle and I held conversation that included smiles, and civil eye contact; but then, as if remembering something suddenly, she would become terse again, and inevitably abandon the room.

And—notably—the strange occurrences that began that sixth night in the manor-house continued to occur, and at intervals that were somewhat intimidating for a not-yet Inspector such as I.

Attempting to communicate with the phantom at night, I received two more audible responses: UPSTAIRS! and FOLLOW ME! Oh, but where, dear Spirit? The shadow sylph could never quite escape my periphery, just a fluttering at the corner, the shape of a gown, a brief glimpse in the window-pane. And each time, I froze pathetically: pinioned at once by terror, and bewilderment, and thrill. On a night Mr. Rochester accompanied, we observed thumping on the floors; we heard a madman's muttering from that red-room, muffled, as if within the very walls themselves. This, a first incident of masculine characteristic.

Occurrences were not relegated to inspection. I woke on a morning to what was certainly someone breathing just above my head (nothing there but a watercolour painting). A heavy thudding overhead distracted from afternoon translation, as if someone paced in some unknown room. A similar ruckus, taking tea with Mr. Rochester in the library, this time again as if in the very walls.

Unfortunately, there was no turn of the crystal knob in the red-room, although for the occasional bumps and knocks, one would have expected someone to come walking out the little door in a hurry.

Small and plain as it was in the first real nip of autumn, Ferndean's garden was enjoyable to wander—and near a thistle of a rose-bush in need of pruning, Mr. Rochester turned to me and asked, 'Have you fallen in love with Adèle yet?'

'Pardon?' I was affronted, and somewhat bemused by the prospect of falling for such a capricious woman at all.

'Everyone falls in love with Adèle. She inherited that curse from her mother.'

'And what did you inherit?' I countered, desperate to evade conversation about my romantic inclinations lest I misinterpret his motive behind asking or how close he stood to me now.

He shrugged idly. 'From my father: mercury and iron will. From my mother: faith.'

'Faith, then?' Did he also feel a sudden chill down the spine? 'This seems ironic.'

Mr. Rochester fixed me with that dark, deep-feeling gaze. 'Faith is not always about God, Mr. Sallow. And—I suppose I also inherited from her a tenacious shade of independence.'

I wanted to ask further about the family. But it was then I saw it: a shadow in the window of the uppermost storey of the house, a flicker of a shape in that gabled casement, an attic room certainly accessible by that locked stair door, instinct decreed. It leaned there, almost imperceptible in the day's gauzy light. But there was no denying: whomever it was—whatever it was—hunched there on the other side of the glass—watching us.

'What is it, Jackie?' Mr. Rochester asked, so I must have worn quite the look of horror.

'Oh,' said I, 'in the window—'

He turned: but the shape in the window had ducked out of sight.

A second time, young Mr. Rochester brought up the subject of God. The day was one of terrible wind and the threat of rain; in the dark of night, the storm finally broke, howling at the eaves and battering the windows. Sitting up together in the music room, I explained to Mr. Rochester the origins of

Electro-Static charge theories, and how to measure ambient fluctuations on the little Electro-Compass I'd brought.

'Is it Electro-Static charge which brought Frankenstein's monster to life?' Mr. Rochester inquired.

'It remains to be discovered, what sort of essence animates us.'

'Do you believe in God, Jackie?'

'I believe in Something beyond us.'

'My mother was a devout believer in the Holy. And if there is Holy, there must also be Unholy—for all Light, there is also Dark.'

'Do you believe something unholy cohabitates in this manor-house with you?'

Young Mr. Rochester stared at me long and quiet, settled down on the piano bench across from me. His eyes were an owl's: wide, and sage-like—penetrative, but numinously impenetrable as he murmured, 'Strangely enough, I believe it to be kind, belignant.'

It occurred to me then, watching him tap a piano key here, there: he wanted It to be his mother or his father. He wanted this beyond extrapolation. He was very alone in this manor-house; his sister was of no emotional relief. Perhaps such was also a motive in asking me here. He desired a companion like a lone child inventing invisible comrades. No; this is naïve: it was not merely about camaraderie. He desired a *companion*. Just the two of us, in this dark music room, his tapping the keys and my unwavering eye contact. And Reader, I was breaths away from offering myself as a companion after all these weeks of his smiles and owl glances, if not for the sudden shriek and crash of glass upstairs, the slam of a door.

Like lightning strikes ourselves, young Mr. Rochester and I shot to the upper storey. Alas, when we arrived on the scene, it was simply Miss Fairfax and Miss Adèle in the hall, the former huddled over shards of porcelain on the floor and the latter standing at the door of her apartments in a lace-hemmed nightgown, clenching her jaws against furious breaths.

'Sister?' Mr. Rochester cried.

'All is well,' she bit out. 'An accident: I dropped a figurine. Quel dommage!'

Mr. Rochester said not a word after, but I sensed in the subsequent thunderclap that he understood the same as me: she had thrown the figurine in some sort of fit, but at whom and for what reason, went un-meditated.

—

18—:

I asked Miss Fairfax how she felt, to be part of Ferndean's broken clockwork. ''Tis through my father's side,' she explained, folding clean laundry with mechanical precision. 'My great-aunt Fairfax worked for the late Mr. Rochester. It was her family's side related to the Rochesters beforehand. My great-aunt, too, who felt the most guilt for bringing the whole thing to apex.'

'What "whole thing," Miss?' I inquired, curious in a genuinely innocuous fashion.

Miss Fairfax looked to me then so palely, one might have thought *I* the haunt of the manor-house. Her mouth thinned shut; that grey, mute expression was the end of that.

18—:

Day Seventeen. I am missing some of my records: mostly, notes on spectral occurrences. Thank God only those which I have already transferred into my research compilation (excepting two). I discovered this when I retired just after tea, into the dim light of the dark afternoon and the press of the wind through a window I had not left open myself: my papers, all blown about the room! Ink, spilled! I was frenzied. Miss Adèle appeared in my door, asking: 'Has there been *un accident*?'

It was in that moment, regarding her with a hollowness in my soul, that my suspicion finally manifested in full. 'I must say,' I pressed, tightening my jaw against real rancor, 'one would think you wish to sabotage all my efforts here, Mademoiselle.'

'Hmph,' was all her reply, peering at me down her fine French nose, before departing.

For days on end now she has made remarks such as: 'Surely you cannot stand to be here, Mr. Sallow. Surely you must be ready to return home. Surely you have a more comfortable life awaiting you. Surely this is Hell to you. Surely this is too much.'

She knows something about this house which she is not telling. I no longer wonder if she wishes me to become afraid and quit the place. I am firmly convinced such is her goal. Whether it is due to some secret knowledge, or the fondness between her brother and I—or both—I know not. But this jeopardises everything about my observations. What is real—and what isn't?

—

The incidents were regular. Every dis-embodied sound, every ghostly glimmer or shadow, seemed to propel me to that stair door to which only one member of the house held the key.

I confess a spectre of preternatural quality was not the only one hovering near the end of my visit. Something had manifested itself between two young men, that dared not speak its name: a rosying of young Mr. Rochester's face when I laughed at a cleverness on his tongue; a jolt through my body when he raised a hand to pluck an autumnal leaf from my shoulder in a garden path shielded by swooping trees; how deliciously easy and soothing, evenings spent in the smoking-room with chatter as innocuous as schoolboys'. But this seemed all too trivial when, upon referencing spectral incidents in my compilation of notes, I noticed a peculiar trend: that the occurrences with masculine qualities peaked at moments when young Mr. Rochester and I inhabited one another's space alone.

The most violent event was this, on the twentieth night of my stay:

'This was my mother's favourite room,' young Mr. Rochester enlightened, having followed me all this night to observe me observe—and now having followed me to my room, with all its vermillion and scarlet faded to crimson, claret to burgundy.

He ran his fingers along the lattice of the tall, narrow window. 'She would sit and draw—the window-seat is perfect to look out, isn't it?—and especially when she and my father would quarrel, here she'd seek refuge to compose herself. After she was gone, when I was a young, if a foul mood fell over my father—or myself, I admit—I too retreated to this room. Perhaps I often felt as if she were still here, watching over me. Her favourite room...' He pointed. 'The watercolours on the walls?'

'Yes, Mr. Rochester?'

'My mother's. And the one above your bed.'

It seemed the painting had never been removed since her hand had hung it; the wall-papering along its edges was old and peeling: perhaps there was a relic-like quality about it, a fear of touching should it disturb or insult her memory. I was hesitant to even reach out and straighten it where it had gone a bit crooked.

'When did she die, Mr. Rochester?' asked I.

'I was small. Very small. My father grew ill shortly after. Well—he was a dependent, already, you see. Bad vision—crippled hand. Jackie?'

'Yes?'

'I told you you may call me Jem, yet still you address me as Mr. Rochester.'

'I suppose I feel disrespectful, doing so.'

'*I* suppose I expected you feel comfortable enough to call me Jem.'

Here he was so close to me now, and I was reminded of that first night, at the Ministry lecture, that mysterious little sylph appearing at my side and commanding all the room's attention. Keenly aware was I of the mere inches between us in height—in proximity—and a little lock of hair covering half his ear. Had I moved it, I was sure I'd find elven shape: fairy-bewitching as he was, those dark eyes beautifying a rather plainly-formed face. In fact—in that moment—I thought: I have seen this face before. Not on him, the obvious place; but in the window-pane one night, the brief almost mistakable visage of that ghostly woman—

'Ah,' I breathed. 'It must be your mother!' I leapt to my bed graceless as a child, gesturing to the watercolour that hung there. 'She must be the one who knocks.'

'Knocks, Jackie?'

'Yes.' I was breathless, elated to have an answer for him: proof his dear mother lingered to watch over him. 'Observe.' With gentle fist, I rapped there on the wall panel, just to the right of the watercolour drawing of a tree becoming a girl. The silence was torture. 'Please,' thought I. 'Please.' I knocked again.

'Jack,' young Mr. Rochester murmured. 'It is all right.'

'No, it is in my notes. Look through them, if you are inclined. I have received knocks in reply to my own.'

'Jack, you are standing on the bed.'

'Darling Rochester, you *must* believe me: here, I shall knock again—'

He stood at the bedside, peering up at me with such a shade of heartache, I could not decipher its origin. Would he weep, or shout? But, then, dark-eyed Romeo puzzling at Juliet, he echoed: '*Darling*, you said?'

The spell was, I am reluctant to say, but bound by honesty in these pages, a sensual one: that spectre aforementioned guiding me to circle a hand along his neck; prompting him to crane upwards; and just before love-sick breaths seamed mouths together, there came a storm of knocks along the wall, and a beastly roar sounding from the corridor. Man or monster was indiscernible—just the guttural cry and the horrid thudding of a heavy retreat—a crash—a slamming door—a dramatic outburst of French from Miss Adèle—

Our irresponsibility meant we arrived upon the scene only in time to witness Miss Fairfax beating out the flames of fallen candles, and a flash of Miss Adèle rushing up the stairs through that forever-locked—yet now open—door. I took off at once to follow, but was halted by Miss Fairfax's grasp, shockingly strong for so small a girl.

'Do not follow Mademoiselle,' she hissed. 'The attic is not for guests.'

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18—:

Day Twenty-One. One would think there is something to hide in the attic.

18—:

Night Twenty-One. Miss Fairfax refuses all questions. I begin to wonder if she and Mademoiselle collude against me. Jem seems to take it as injury I have suggested we forget our near-indecency last

night, to keep divorced the personal and the professional. Once again the slim, flittering spirit, which I am confident to call the late Mrs. Rochester, does not respond to my inquires but leads me in glances to that upper stair door.

18—:

Night Twenty-Two. Perhaps my mental faculties are indeed not fit for the isolation of a country house: perhaps Miss Adèle is correct in that, and I am becoming manic for the stillness, the stasis, the solitude. In the day, I cannot concentrate on my work. I feel as though there is something everywhere, watching, waiting to say something, waiting for me to say something: and I recognise, now, how young Mr. Rochester must feel, and why his eyes always seem distracted. Is this really what it is like, to live in a haunted house? To become so vigilant and analytical, highly sensitive yet undisposed to real fear as you become accustomed to every frazzled nerve?

—

'I have decided to return to London,' I announced to young Mr. Rochester, on an afternoon in which the bite of coming winter was prominent and the leaves scattered about the garden path in a way both helpless and dramatic. He fixed me with a sharp, raw look that spoke of the mercurial nature he claimed to have inherited.

'And why?' he demanded.

'I am not so experienced, Jem—I am not sure I can accomplish here much more than what I have, and that is to confirm, at least in my opinion, your mother still drifts in the *après-monde*. I am not in official capacity to advise further steps—'

'No,' he barked, "I ask why you tell me this *now*, of all times, when the whole purpose of having invited you to walk the garden with me is *personal* and not *professional*?'

I'd swear my heart had fallen through my body. 'Jem?' I prompted, although the rise in my pulse seemed of the same source as his sudden red-faced *pathos*.

'Do not go to London,' young Mr. Rochester commanded.

'Am I prisoner of Ferndean, then?'

'I do not believe you have fulfilled the service I requested.'

'I have done all I can—'

'And when the Ministry reviews your application, and calls to interview—don't think I cannot see through you, Mr. John Sallow; yes, I know you hope a record of this haunted holiday demonstrates your abilities to them—I shall tell them you quit the place early. I shall tell them you did nothing but stir things up and abandon us.'

'What am I to do, James?' I cried. 'I am no Medium. I have done the very basic of your request: in fact, I do not recall a formal request for anything at all other than to observe.'

'But you will be missed!' he shouted back, as if the sudden gust of wind pulled the words from him the same it pushed me to him, pushed me to clutch at his shoulders and then finally to embrace in the knotty shade of wood. Ah, when Eros and Aphrodite confuse one another's offices, is it not blissful torture? Is it right to call it by what it is when it outlies the proctorship of moral tradition: a passionate kiss?

The afternoon was fading. 'Come to London,' I insisted as we wandered, huddled against the wind, back to the house. 'I cannot,' he said. It was my turn to demand justification.

But there it was again: the shadow, hunched-back and dense, glowering down at us from the attic window. Instantly I pulled away from young Mr. Rochester. Rather, I stopped quite suddenly; he continued a step or two before turning back to me, perplexed. The half-obscured form in the window swerved out of sight once more, but not before I perceived the obvious features of a face.

'Jem,' said I: 'I do have something to accomplish before I depart. We shall find out what it is in the attic of this house.'

—

18—:

Night Twenty-Three. All night there has been a horrific howling from the attic.

—

Whether it was Miss Fairfax or that rickety butler who prepared dinner's stew, it was delicious, but Miss Adèle's unrelenting glare made all turn tasteless for the alkaline unease that coated my tongue. Young Mr. Rochester was practised, it seemed, in brushing off his adoptive sister's more hateful moods; this perhaps deepened their roots. And yes, there was a bit of spite in the way I put her on the spot this evening—emboldened, in hindsight, and re-invigourated, by Romance's surge of virile confidence: this, or the sense of having some sort of upper-hand in some sort of unspoken battle.

'I was curious, Mademoiselle,' I said, after taking a napkin to my mouth and reaching for my drink. 'You never did tell me the history of this grand house.'

With a sniff of French disdain, she replied: 'Thornfield Hall was grander.'

I was correct in my assumptions that appeals to self-image might secure me some truth, especially so in the presence of a bottle of French wine. 'Thornfield Hall, Mademoiselle?'

'Yes, where my adoptive father lived before this. It burned.'

Young Mr. Rochester fell still as if a garden abandoned by wind and stared into his stew so intently, one might have believed he'd never seen it before. If Miss Adèle at all noticed this odd shock of his (I did), she did not relent.

'Everything was lost to that fire,' she muttered. '*Tout*—everything! And do we all still believe the poor woman jumped? Oh, had she not come back. Had she not come back!'

By the end of this small rant, she was on her feet, having thrown down her napkin, and waving a dove-like hand at her meagre audience.

My pulse jumped. 'Whom?' I pressed.

'Mademoiselle!' Miss Adèle cried, and began to weep. Young Mr. Rochester sat up straight in concern but seemed still too confused to concede to it. 'Mademoiselle,' Miss Adèle said again. 'Oh, if only Mademoiselle Jane had not come back...'

'Mrs. Rochester?' A heat had risen in me. 'You would not have your brother, then,' I insisted fiercely.

'Mais oui, monsieur!' She dove to wind herself around Mr. Rochester in an embrace—very well draped herself about him like a mother clinging to a child in danger. Yet he sat stiff and bewildered

under her kisses: 'He is the only good thing to come of my wretched "father"—he is the last of Mademoiselle Jane and I adore him—oui, mon cheri, je t'adore, je t'adore trop!'

'But she *is* here,' young Mr. Rochester choked out, freeing himself from his sister's grasp as if it repulsed him. There was the darkness, back in his eyes. 'We are finding proof, Adèle. Please, get off me. Your hysterics are heart-wrenching but oh, they are embarrassing. Compose yourself, woman!'

Here Miss Adèle grabbed her drink and threw it down; it shattered, much to the shock of the nerves of all present: myself, Mr. Rochester, the leaning fence-post butler. The wine she had barely drunk began to soak into the old rug. And, just as swiftly and seemingly unreal as that woman-figure I had been witnessing at night, Miss Adèle was gone from the dining room, leaving behind a cascade of French so fierce it may well have been a witch's curse.

—

18—:

> Night Twenty-Four. Miss Adèle has apologised for her outburst. I suppose one must forgive the dark cloud tragedy can leave on a soul. To-night I shall be giving myself a well-needed rest; I must renew my mind before I commit to this attic-mystery. And, now, that of the former Hall and

Young Mr. Rochester's interruption of my journaling was innocent, but it did strike upon a single nerve of impatience: appearing in the door of my room, a silhouette guarding the flame of a nighttime rushlight with one cupped hand, he said gravely —

'You know, I have never been in the attic, Jack.'

The dour look about him weighed on my heart. I beckoned, held out a hand from my seat at the desk, despite only three years between us gathering him to my side as if he were a child tormented by nightmares.

'Did any of that come a surprise to you, Jem?' inquired I. 'What your sister said to-night?'

All the bounce of light twisted the shadows across his face, turned the reds of the room to splashes of blood and the dark of his eyes to depthless mystery. 'Are you suggesting secrets have been kept from me, Jackie?' he demanded. 'By my own family?'

'It is a simple question, Jem.'

'I am bored of questions to-night. Kiss me and be quiet.'

Ah, there: his inherited feist. 'James—'

It was then my heightened nerves set upon a familiar sound. The slow, rustling inhale and exhale, that had so often awoken me as if coming from over my sleeping form. Like a hound on the hunt, my eyes fixed upon the wall against which pressed the head of the four poster. I set down my pen. 'Jackie?' Mr. Rochester demanded again, as I nudged him gently aside and made my way to the bed.

'Sh-h-h—' I gestured with one finger to my lips: listen. Inhalation. Exhalation. The hair rose along the nape of my neck as, leaning, I perceived the sound of respiration seemed to be emitting from within the very wall itself—nay, from BEHIND THE WATERCOLOUR HANGING!

Impassioned, I knocked the painting from the wall. There, having been concealed just behind the frame, easily mistaken for a rip in the wall-papering, was a peep-hole. And on the other side of this peep-hole, a bright, glimmering, half cataracted eye, set in a scarred and hideous face. A flesh and blood face, which swiftly moved away to reveal an interior space behind the wall just large enough for a man to shuffle to and fro within. *Veritable Roman roadways*, Mr. Rochester had said before: well, certainly!

I uttered a shout both outraged and appalled, wrenching away from the revelation. Young Mr. Rochester in turn staggered back, crying: 'What—?' as I fled the room to chase the thumping sounds I had once attributed to spectral knocking but now suspected to be somehow of mortal origin. An intruder, perhaps. No: the scuffling and thumping within the wall—the ceiling—moved in the direction of that locked stair door. The stranger in the wall was fleeing the scene.

Of course. The shadow upstairs; Miss Adèle running up on her own; no one allowed, said Miss Fairfax. Not even young Mr. Rochester!

In a conscious fury, I pounded on Miss Adèle's chamber door. 'Explain this!' I roared. The Mademoiselle threw her door open with a look of harsh disdain, clutching her dressing-robe with all the glance of soft flesh expected of a French woman. 'Explain yourself!' I cried.

'*Pardon*?' she sputtered. 'Monsieur, it is near midnight—'

'What is this ruse?' I gestured. 'Jem, are you aware of this? What sort of con is in play? Who resides in the attic, woman—?'

The slap of her hand punctuated my fit, and thank goodness, for a spectral inspector could not lose his head so. All the capricious charade had left her; here she was cold and calm, peering down her nose.

'Je suis *Mademoiselle*,' she said. 'Do you really wish to know what is in the attic?'

'Yes!' I cried the same that young Mr. Rochester did, standing there with the only light around.

Miss Adèle retreated. She picked through a few cases on her vanity before withdrawing a key, and returned to stand before me, lifting her chin. Although smaller than I, it still felt as though she looked down upon *me*.

'Come, then,' she said, 'Monsieur *Inspecteur*.'

Oh, how tense the climb up that narrow old stair, following her figure which seemed to know the path by heart and darkness. Young Mr. Rochester followed close; when I turned to give him a look of reassurance, I noticed Miss Fairfax squinting up after us from the lower threshold. Again my anger was sparked like a flint-strike.

The attic of Ferndean was a bleak space, prison-like in the occasional slip of moonlight. A scampering of a mouse from the candles, a whisper of cobweb and spider; the grey walls seemed fit to fall through the same as the floorboards; the smell was of must and dirt and all manner of stale, closed-up, forgotten things; every shadow seemed to shrink away only to throb back as the light passed it. Here, there—what appeared to be hinges, trap-doors, or—God—my instinct alerted me—entries to some secret passageways, like the one behind the red-room wall.

Miss Adèle stopped suddenly in the centre of the attic.

'Monsieur Rochester!' she beckoned in that thick, syrupy way.

The hush was torture: or perhaps the unendurable aspect arose from the distinct feeling that the empty was not empty at all. There came a shuffling in the reaches beyond sight. Finally, It came into the flickering light—

A man, or what was left of one, which did not seem to be much for all the fettered, broken quality about him. And he was no small stature to behold: a large man by build but whose natural solidness was slumped, and sedated, as if a felled tree propped up. His hair was a mass of overgrown waves, raven-black streaked by grey; the scruff of a beard, the same. One hand—or the lack thereof—he kept tucked into the side of his form, pigeon-chested as it was, with too-long limbs that seemed slightly off-kilter, perhaps from folding himself in and out of the walls. Topping it all, a brow carved heavy and weathered as seaside bluffs, one-and-a-half black eyebrows furrowed towards a square nose slightly tilted for the way a terrible burn-scar puckered and thickened one side of the deeply-lined, squarer visage. Grim, Vulcan-like, and seeming dangerous to approach, nostrils flaring there, jaw working behind his lips, a battered beast stayed only by Miss Adèle's outstretched hand and shrill laughter:

'And who is the lunatic in the attic now, Monsieur Rochester!'

I snatched the light from young Mr. Rochester and held it closer; indeed, the man hunched away from the light as if afraid. Of the flame or of being known, it was unclear. But yes, this was the twisted face I had seen watching us in the garden; this was the man looking on from behind the watercolour. I thrust the light Miss Adèle's way. It cast such shadows across her face, the cherub heralded hellish. "I do not understand," I insisted. 'What is the meaning—?'

Smiling at me as if sharing some frivol—the expression, ghastly widened by the slant of shadows—she divulged:

'Yes, it is Monsieur Edward Fairfax Rochester, whose Thornfield Hall burned so long ago. This wretched man, this bigamist, who welcomed your poor mother Mademoiselle Jane as my governess and tried to marry her as if he had not locked his mad and suffering wife in the attic of Thornfield. Oui, and when all discovered his deplorable character, she ran. She should have! I wanted to go with her! And then Madame Bertha—*someone* started the fire—off the battlements she went—and then Jane came back, and married this devil, and sent me off, and brought you into the world, and this man never

told me when Mademoiselle first fell ill, non, so I can only conjecture: did you drive her mad, too, Monsieur Rochester? Non! Ne me répondez pas!'

The man—Mr. Edward Rochester—Jem's father—sulked like a forlorn beast on display. He was her spectacle. He was the savage she kept half-civilised in this attic-zoo. The mistress of this madness, this failed cherub, swung a hand around and accosted the poor being by way of a pointed, accusatory finger.

'Silliness! Foolishness! Caprices and charlatans! All you men, always wrapped up in your own little dramas—well, we refuse to play damsel to you any longer.' Here Miss Adèle's laughter echoed again as she turned back to me: 'Yes, I stole your notes. I did what I could to ruin it all, keep Jem from finding out. But Mr. Rochester is the one who watches. He knows he is helpless to control the world as he was once wont to, and this is his purgatory. No longer can he manipulate, and machinate! No, he is a ghost now, just as his first wife, just as my *Maman* might have become, just as Mademoiselle Jane became!'

She caught her breath, breast heaving. And somehow, the first Mr. Rochester sounded more sane than she as he spoke, in a voice like gravel:

'James?'

He addressed his son. I turned, stricken by guilt I had neglected to remember young Mr. Rochester's presence behind me. But my lover had not moved. He stood, rooted, hand still hovering from where I'd taken the light—wide-eyed, yet weeping. The tears simply rolled down from two dark eyes which matched the attic-man's one good one. For, naturally, they were of the same blood. Obviously, the two knew one another.

'Father?' he finally replied.

The attic-man, too, began to weep. He rushed forth with a dangerous passion, to embrace or throttle, I knew not. And surely I was not the only one who heard a woman's voice, struggling against the veil between Living and Dead:

'Oh, my poor dears!'

—

18—:

> Reader, I ran. I quit the house in a frenzy. I was shaken, and shocked: horrified of becoming involved in some unexpected criminality and—and what? What is all this that has just unfolded? Those at the coach-house: 'Didn't anyone tell you Ferndean was a queer place?'

—

Miss Adèle did not lie. Edward Fairfax Rochester had kept his first wife as a ward in the attic, suffering as she did with weaknesses of mind, and suffering as he did with shame and selfishness. Miss Jane Eyre accepted the role of governess; Edward Rochester paid her handsomely; they fell in love; they almost married. His near bigamy came to light. She fled. She returned: the first Mrs. Rochester was truly deceased, and their wedding was unpretentious but full of love. Shortly after, James Rochester was born. Jane fell ill. Adèle returned two days before her interment. Edward Rochester was already a twice-broken man: he did not resist Miss Adèle's banishing him to the attic, so long as he could observe his son in private paternal pride.

Mr. Edward Rochester simply could not stand being found out by his son, prowling about like a blind mole in the yard. Endure he could not, his son knowing the shame to which he had conceded: his withering faculties, his submission—nay, his *welcoming* this punishment for his undeniable sins: the first Mrs. Rochester; Adèle's mother; sweet Jane Eyre.

All this, was learned from the note he left before donning that gibbeting garland. And all this, young Mr. Rochester confessed to me on the portico of the Ministry dormitories, where he had been waiting, God knew how long, for me to appear: yes, accosting me like the beggar in gentleman's coat, dashing forth a step or two before stopping as I caught his eye—Jack Sallow! It is me!

It had been three months since I'd quit Ferndean. Not once had he written; I could offer no better. Still, like lodestones, the distance had closed, and now left nothing but the tension as I stood two steps above him on the stoop and he two steps below on the side-walk.

'So you never did know, Jem?' I prompted.

Wilted and glum, young Mr. Rochester peered up at me. 'What, Jackie? That my sister kept my father hostage in the attic of the family manor?'

'Well...'

'No. I did not know. I am loath to think of it.' It was the same curt, demanding way he'd said, 'I am bored. Kiss me and be quiet.' I did not blame him. I too would be loath to dwell on the idea of a parent, watching me through the walls half my life, shut in by a mad sister. Be heartened, darling Rochester, I wanted to say, that your father had left a note. My brother had not.

'I am so very sorry,' I said quietly instead, 'for your loss.'

Young Mr. Rochester shook the shadow from his face, a lofty gesture that was not unlike his adoptive sister, yet all his own. The London night was a surprisingly clear one, cold, lights reflecting diaphanous off slick pavement and glass: voices, clatter, street-traffic. In the brisk wind, his collar danced about his throat, and his hair about those dark, owl-like eyes. How my hand twitched to reach and brush it back. How he peered up at me as if he waited for that very move.

'You are an Inspector now, Jackie?' he asked, finally.

I looked up at the terrace lodgings behind me, down the row of them at the main Ministry of Occult Occurrences building, to which this very dormitory terrace was adjoined. I was just returning from a visit with a Fleet Street funerary society, researching death certificates in connection with a particular haunting. Yes, I thought, heart soaring and sinking at once. 'Yes,' I said. 'I am, indeed.'

He nodded, vaguely, and I also would not blame him for a feeling of dejection: his tragedy had indeed made my application quite appealing to the Spiritualist society, and I had all intentions of reaching out to the Rochesters before the Ministry did, once I had helped the Research Inspectors compile a case.

I opened the front door of the terrace-house which housed my lodgings. 'Come,' I said. Young Mr. Rochester looked up, brows raised. I held out a hand. 'Come inside with me, darling Rochester. Now you are *my* guest. And I am sure some of my colleagues would be thrilled to make your acquaintance.'

part two — afterwards, & an afterword

The "Trouble" with Adaptation

Much attention is paid to adaptation from text to screen. Intertextual adaptation and transformative literature is spared less, and too often driven by varying degrees of contempt. The trouble with adaptation is who decides what the trouble is, and that begins with the impossibility of defining adaptation and transformative work at all. In one corner, we have the *Epic of Gilgamesh* and the *Iliad* standing generally apart from one another despite clear character and motif similarities. Alongside them, serving as models for storytelling's rich intertextual and sociopolitical power—the *Odyssey*, the *Aeneid*. Homer's *Odyssey* is itself an expansion of the *Iliad* epic, and the first of millennia's worth. Characters, places, and events resurface in the context of sequel or prequel tales, new themes, new questions, new histories, entrances, exits, extrapolations, explanations: Aeschylus' *Oresteia* and *Myrmidons* to the Trojan women of Euripides, to Shakespeare's own *Troilus and Cressida*. All these works are accepted—assumed, at the very least go unquestioned—into the original story as distinct, qualified members of a canon. Despite possessing authors who span genre, century, and context, scholarship treats this collection as, generally, one unit in relative agreement, to which they turn time and again as tenable source authority.

This means Anne Carson, Mary Renault, Madeline Miller's *The Song of Achilles* and *Circe* or Natalie Haynes' *A Thousand Ships* are entries into Homeric canon, as well—contributing nuance, intricacy, and questions and answers not from Some Other Corner, but as fellows of the Greek

dramatists, Roman politicians, Elizabethan playwrights, and other trusted adaptation-ers within the long history of the same originary stories. Doesn't it?

Contemporary literature receives these modern adaptations as retellings, reimaginings—not *new* and not *equal*, but as derivative of and thus secondary to what has persisted as official Western literary canon. Scholars and critics will recognize the canon proper as a collection of adaptations and later additions, when necessary, yet contemporary adaptation and transformative literature is largely generalized as frivolous at best, transgression at worst.

Of course there are various complicating factors today, such as commerciality, creative authority, ownership, and access, that were not as ubiquitous in antiquity. What should be noted as timeless, though, is the complex relationship between author/audience demographics and systems of privilege, prestige, and power. Where else lies the difference between the *Aeneid* as state-sponsored fan fiction of the *Odyssey*—different characters, same story—and an unaffiliated fan-authored contemporary literary novel in the Attack on Titan tag of Archive of One's Own.org—same characters, different story?

Unironically, modern fan fiction might be the most incisive and insightful cases of adaptation as an act of literary criticism. Fan fiction author/audience in 1992 was conceptualized by Camille Bacon-Smith as cishet, white, American, educated, underemployed women (qtd. in Popova). The contemporary fan work community is largely younger, more queer, female-identifying or nonbinary, white but fighting for BIPOC presence—to put it *very* simply, the antithesis to heteronormativity. It seems unnecessary then to lay out the demographic pattern of literary theorists, historians, scholars,

and other figures in power whose voices have dominated not just the study of literature but the popular experience of it for it to be understood how the tradition of denigrating "unofficial" fan-authored adaptation has come about and persists. In the deeply inequitable system of popular Western literature and literary history—still very much capitalist, classist, racist, sexist, ableist, and homophobic—it should surprise no one how quickly stories are disparaged when published for free, by unknown writers, that enrich reader experience of "real" stories by transforming elements within them, asking questions and exploring possibilities and addressing elements such as plot continuity, character complexity and development, or recasting the text's representation of intersectional identities (such as queer contextuality).

In a system where fidelity to originary texts is held in high esteem, when adaptation and transformative literature works on this structural level, challenging craft, content, and proposing new intentions—which come with new results—the outside reception is one of disgust or despair: how could someone knowingly commit such an offense against the integrity and intent of a writer, how entitled must a reader be to mangle someone else's story in the name of indulging some fetish or agenda? Yes, let's just say it: society has decided one particular brand of adaptation and transformative literature is the most heinous, and it's found online, and it's all gay, and it's all sex and it's all so poorly written with such improper intentions that it must be hidden from consideration.

But that's the key. There is the trouble. The current Western literary consciousness is horrified by how producing and consuming adaptation and transformative literature is a powerful act of literary criticism and literary *activism*. Adaptation requires us to consider authorial intent. It requires us to

rethink our systems of analyzing literature and acknowledge that adaptations are the record of conversations held between cultures and texts—which means, then, we must recognize their larger calls to action. They are catharsis, homage, expansion, exploration, representation, affirmation, *reflection*.

Adaptations and transformative literature are the farthest from frivolous, if not for sheer variety—retellings, alternate universes, continuations, canon elaborations (fanon, headcanon), crossovers, et cetera—then for the intense undertaking of critical and cultural awareness it requires of an author to address issues of storytelling arising within a text or inspired by a text. By emphasizing authorial intent, adaptations demonstrate that the "clear link between [stories] and real-world concerns" is not lost on an audience (Popova).

Adaptations and transformative literature do not fit neatly into literary criticism or genre. By reimagining a story, they are acts of resistance against the sociocultural framework in which that story is situated and can, or can't, be of service to whichever brand of literary criticism is in fashion. Especially pervasive is the question of what to do with this "authorial intent"—the driving force of adaptation—this precarity of balancing the "margin and center" in order to give voice to represented ideologies and identities (qtd. in Schaff 28). In "Charlotte Brontë's Presentiments, Sympathies, and Signs: An Introduction," John Farrell cites Syd Thomas in articulating the idea of authorial intent as an "irreducible interplay of conscious meaning and unconscious revelation" (qtd. in Farrell 540). Yet schools of thought are historically quick to dismiss it as "terribly unfashionable," Popova puts kindly, as if accounting for as much threatens the integrity of analysis—as if this interplay is not the very reason there is criticism with which to engage: Structuralism. Gender studies. Ecocriticism.

Postcolonialism. Metamodernism. There is no commentary without acknowledging and examining the refractions of the author's interior and exterior landscapes. The implicit and explicit, the conscious and unconscious.

If at all, adaptation and transformative literature are evaluated especially harshly in this regard—as *finished product*. But the real and very overlooked value of adaptation and transformative literature lies, actually, in their *genesis*.

Afterword

This afterword is not meant to devalue familiar methods of critical readings, only to supplement the dominant expectations and limitations traditional literary criticism risks placing upon itself with regard to intertextual, intersectional, and interdisciplinary experiences of literature when it reduces author, text, and reader to exclusive entities interacting with one another. To do this, I break down the methodology behind "Rochester"—as a creative writer: the craft, the process, the contemplating, writing, and reflecting on writing—and provide a sampling of possible critical readings to demonstrate how adaptation can be examined as an act of literary criticism.

Rearranging the Room: Authorial Resonance & Writing an Adaptation

I am a hybrid writer. My poetry and prose examines the fractals of form and feeling—image, lyricality, broken narrative. Lived experiences and a background in both History and English means there is no escaping queer theory or postgender and metamodern underpinnings in my work. With the "Black Moon Lilith" lunar apogee in my natal chart eighth house, you can't get away from the horrible or the sensual, either.

As an historian—but also as a writer? There's no separating the two—one of my interest areas is Victorian London. The role of Classics, empire, and capitalism in Victorian gender/sexuality anxieties, in Romantic and Gothic literature, in historical phenomena such as "Principal Boy" drag performance or the 1888 Cleveland Street Scandal. Not to mention the enduring homophobic effects of appropriating ancient literature. But my favorite haunt here is actually at the intersection of all those

inquiries—and the occult. I'm obsessed with the "ghosts" of liminal lived experiences in nineteenth century London: drug abuse, sex work, funeral businesses, Spiritualist societies, and queerness.

I also cut my teeth reading and writing adaptation.

—

Imagine *Jane Eyre* a room. Charlotte Brontë dressed this room: some furniture was inherited; other pieces, constructed by hand; others yet refurbished. A slanted bookcase, a treasured escritoire, dusty Oriental rug, a hated sideboard cabinet. Readers both leisurely and critical view this room through the large mirror on the wall, seeing only the reflection of what Brontë has put together, the refraction of it, from different angles, different hours of the day. Stevenson's *Jane Eyre* dusts off that rug and moves in a new grandfather clock; Hitchcock's *Rebecca* clears the center of the room of any furniture whatsoever. Short stories like "Reader, I Married Him" and "Grace Poole, Her Testimony" flip the entire arrangement: chairs against the east wall are now against the west, throw pillows are replaced, the wall-papering redone; *Wide Sargasso Sea* turns all the chairs upside down, and opens the heirloom sideboard cabinet wide to show off the fine bone china, and *Jane Eyre Laid Bare* takes that fine china, the throw pillows, hurls them to the floor in a provocative fit. Surely so does Bertha in Teale's stage adaptation.

It is the same room, of course—physically—yet the *experience* of the room is different. The purpose of objects has changed; the placement of them has freed up space or crowded the floor or spun the orientation. Look at the way daylight hits that old painting now, illuminating postcolonial anxieties in nineteenth-century Britain—with the table closer in view, one can make out all the scuffs and

scratches in the lacquered wood from fears of the governess transgressing upon class divides—read the unresolved sexual tension in the shards of china on the floor.

Rearrangement choices made are the author's, both originary and thereafter; the image in the glass is the resonance of those choices. To explore this idea of authorial resonance, I break down my approach to writing an adaptation, demonstrating resonance both conscious and unconscious, and then present a few possible critical readings. That is—how I've rearranged the room, why I've rearranged the room, and what the room might feel like now.

Methodology[1]

This short story was not at all the adaptation I set out to write. In fact, my original plan was to adapt *Great Expectations*: first, a "What if?" scenario of Herbert Pocket running a London drag club; next, a contemporary "inspired by" piece that renovated Dickens's room by borrowing story and character elements of the rags to riches identity drama; or, last, a short story from Herbert Pocket's perspective, framed as a series of love letters written to a mysterious Handel (Pip, the composer, or some other secret acquaintance?). None of these seemed to move forward, which prompted some considerable thought on the following: What was the story I wanted to tell, and why? More importantly, what were the elements of the originary text I felt I absolutely needed—and did I actually need them at all?

In the first two ideas, Pip's perspective was bored and boring. I was reluctant to navigate "rewriting" what happened in London and equally hesitant to tackle cherry picked story elements in such a constrained project where the only real explicit holdover in the contemporary piece would be

[1] "Rochester" page numbers correspond to thesis page numbers.

Miss Havisham (not that that disappointed me). Inspired by *Jack Maggs*, the third pitch would explore other perspectives, especially the homosocial subtext between Pip and Herbert, the potential for homoeroticism and queerness buried beneath nineteenth-century London's insistence of its own moral propriety. But nothing really seemed to *move*. I felt as though I were window-shopping through a catalogue of room designs appealing to aesthetic and vision, but which I couldn't quite commit to arranging in my own home.

Struggling with fidelity to concept and fidelity to creative liberties, the swerve to *Jane Eyre* was triggered unexpectedly by a Brazilian historical drama on Allan Kardec and the birth of French Spiritism. I already have an affinity for the gothic novel, as well as Victorian occult and the Spiritualist movement (not to be fully confused with Spiritism), and I thought: what about using *new* characters in the same world, playing to the gothic atmosphere? Also, whatever happened to Jane and Edward's son?

I would have to take creative liberties regarding chronology. After all, Spiritualism did not hit the peak at which I needed it to be until at *least* the 1860s, and searching nearly in vain for a comprehensive "official" timeline of *Jane Eyre* resulted in slim pickings of fan-made chronologies in 50/50 disagreement with one another over which half of the century the novel is situated in. One source working off the 1808 publication date of *Marmion*, a book which Jane receives in Chapter 32, spans her life from birth in 1789 to novel close in 1819 (Thompson). This would put their son being born around 1810. Another comprehensive albeit unofficial source places Jane's birth in 1847, positioning the novel in a more appropriate timeframe for me, except for marking baby Rochester's

arrival in 1883; this doesn't at all match to the same timeline's 1874 date of marriage to Rochester, as the novel indicates on page 451 their son was born somewhere around two to three years thereafter (Finn). So—keeping it Victorian aesthetic—I decided the year would be "18—."

Set in this undisclosed year, the short story "Rochester" follows an amateur Spiritualist to the cold, gloomy Ferndean manor-house at the request of a young Mr. Rochester (Jane and Edward's son) intent on discovering what it is that haunts the halls of his home.

The Conscious: Authorial Intent

Noticeable from just the opening paragraph is creative homage to/preservation of period. The narrative tone, the syntax and language, all recall the Victorian voice, but perhaps most immediately in vocabulary and spelling: *restive*, *sceptic* (Lenk 3). First-person point of view holds out suspense as far as narrator, but by the end of this first scene, we are introduced to an unfamiliar Rochester—Jane and Edward's son.[2]

In designing young Rochester, I knew three things for certain: he would be no older than twenty-two; he would be interested in Spiritualism; and he would be a mix of Rochester and Jane. Dark eyes "capable of intense feeling" (4) in an otherwise unremarkable face, and a "a secretive quality about him, somehow seeming both full of vigour yet somehow plain, at once on the precipice of either leaping up with a shout or sliding out of view" (6). The interesting difficulty was in choosing a name. I gathered names I liked—August, Theodore, Aster—but none seemed to fit. I explored the realm of names inspired by birds, homage to Jane's love for Bewick's *Birds*, but Larkin was too much, as was

[2] Referred to as *young Mr. Rochester* here; Edward Fairfax Rochester of the Brontë novel will be simply *Rochester*.

Argus. With the most popular Biblical names of the time, I was ultimately torn between *John* and *James*. In good conscience I couldn't use *John* after all the terrible Johns in Jane's life, so I settled on James and its nickname *Jem*. Next was the narrator's name, this amateur Spiritualist, and I loved the way Jem and "Jackie" (nickname for John) fit together, but again I thought: No, I can't name him John, it seems insensitive. But—actually—why not? Would this John be another downfall? Can not even Jane's progeny escape the Johns of the world? Thus was born the narrator, John Sallow.

Establishing the setting at Ferndean signals the story takes place after the events of the originary novel, and calls upon reader contextualization. The arrival and description of the isolated manor-house borrows language and images from Jane's account of coming upon Ferndean: "near-oppressive clusters of deep, watchful wood, hoar ... swooped branch ... stone-pillared iron gates like entering a crypt" (7). On page 9, Sallow remarks that Ferndean seems the "perfect breeding ground for ghost stories," reproducing that familiar sense of mystery and gothic atmosphere. Not only does young Mr. Rochester insist the manor is haunted, and townspeople warn Sallow about the gloomy house, but even as Adèle Rochester finally debuts, she too alludes to Ferndean as the last circle of Hell (7). Readers understand she hates the house, but—why? How has Ferndean become so foreshadowed? And why, the reader might wonder, is Adèle so suddenly cold, aloof, bitter?

On page 10, while touring the manor-house, young Mr. Rochester shows Sallow the "red-room." Here we have a reincarnation of Jane's terrifying childhood experience. This already having such context for the reader, and connotations of fear and ghosts, that same harrowing tension is sustained by claims of ghostly activity—thumps in the walls, rattling doorknobs—and, young Mr.

Rochester explains, this is the only guest room presently prepared. However, complicating the preservation of the red room's haunted and haunting qualities, later on page 18 young Mr. Rochester reveals the Ferndean red-room was his mother's favorite room, where she would sit and draw, or "seek refuge to compose herself" when "foul mood[s]" fell over his father.[3]

Throughout the short story, Sallow records experiences and paranormal events via journal entry sections for his eventual "report" to London Spiritualist organizations. I was tasked with finding a way to capture the same effect as Jane's midnight experiences at Thornfield with sudden fires and goblin laughter within the bounds of the short story length and form—but this is also an intertextual moment, entering into that conversation with *Lady Audley's Secret* and *Dracula*, à la Robert Audley or Jonathan Harker, respectively, and perhaps representative of their Victorian interlay as well as their enduring place in the literary consciousness (here, mine) even a century and a half later. Indeed, Sallow's frequent narrative introductions of: "Reader, … " also prompts the audience back into the original room of *Jane Eyre*.

The Unconscious: Authorial Resonance

Upon second and third readings, unconscious refractions of the originary novel come further and further to light. The conversation between Sallow and young Mr. Rochester on page 4 after the Ministry of Occult Occurrences lecture is reminiscent of Jane's first "real" meeting of Rochester:

> "The fire shone full on [Rochester's face … [he] went on as a statue would." (Brontë 119-20)

[3] Note on page 15, young Mr. Rochester asserts his mother was no passive party: "[her] tenacious shade of independence."

> "[Young Mr. Rochester] lingered alone peering into the fire, as if intent on some image in the flame like in a scryer's mirror." (Lenk 4)

"Scryer's mirror" might also refer back to the idea of Spiritualism, implying destiny here and destiny in *Jane Eyre*, as well as emphasizing a mysteriousness about young Mr. Rochester reflective of his father. On page 3, we are brought back again to remember this is the son of Jane and Rochester, as young Mr. Rochester explains his mother "had loved birds, [so] the bird-headed marionette at the [menagerist's] pleased him."

Miss Adèle and young Mr. Rochester receive Sallow upon his arrival in a parlor that seems in "mid-arrangement—heavy sashes [concealing] half the room; ... [chairs] quite cold and unused" (7). This setting functions both consciously and unconsciously, imbuing the sense of something unfinished or abandoned: mid-arrangement from arriving, or attempting to depart? Yet, upon closer reading, this scene also prompts readers to recall Rochester's initial reception of Jane, where it seemed more an interrogation or test than a real welcoming (Brontë 121-25). Similarly, the pull of young Mr. Rochester on Sallow is clear and reminiscent of that on Jane by Rochester, and on Rochester by Jane:

> "Nervous [to have] no distraction or diversion ... how madly appealing I found him. He could never find out ... I wondered if he already knew, judging by the occasional coy and curious glance." (Lenk 6)

> "I both wished and feared to see Mr. Rochester on the day which followed this sleepless night: I wanted to hear his voice again, yet feared to meet his eye." (Brontë 153)

> "I knew," he continued ... I saw it in your eyes when I first beheld you: their expression and smile [did not] strike delight to my very inmost heart so for nothing." (151)

On pages 21-22 of the short story, the reflection and refraction of *Jane Eyre*'s stormy proposal scene developed entirely organically. At the start of writing, there was no real "plan" to engage with that scene in such a way, especially not with such resonance as a direct connection of Sallow insisting he leave Ferndean as Jane had insisted she leave Thornfield as arguments hurtle towards the peak of romantic tension.

In the originary text, Jane's paintings are bizarre and psychologically telling; this is an element that intrigued me upon reading the novel, and arose again here unconsciously. On page 18, Sallow observes the watercolor hanging above his bed, a drawing done by Jane herself of a girl transforming into a tree. The watercolor allusion is deliberate, but the implications of the chosen subject are unconscious: Apollo and Daphne-esque, or perhaps just musing on nature as Jane was wont to do, what does this subject matter say about Jane? That is, what does it say about what *I* think of Jane?

Like du Maurier's decision never to name the new Mrs. de Winters, the choices made create tension and shake up the feng shui. This is where critical readings come in: the room has been rearranged, and the reader stands before the mirror to observe the design decisions through the glass.

Sample Critical Readings

In "Rochester," Jane and Rochester's son solicits the service of an aspiring Spiritualist to get to the bottom of what he believes is a haunted Ferndean, where, after the death of both his mother and his father, until he comes of age for inheritance, he resides with his adopted sister, none other than the unmarried Mademoiselle Adèle Rochester. The following approaches are example critical readings for this short story—simple, straightforward, and brief—just a few glances caught of the room, just passing by in the hall.

Queer Reading

The romance between Sallow and young Mr. Rochester is a focal part of Sallow's character from the very beginning. His queerness is suggested as early as page 4 with the allusion to a myth of Eros "[sleeping] among roseblossoms" when first observing young Mr. Rochester. This is a nod not only to Victorian fixation on the Classics and the associated (and demonized) homoeroticism, but suggestive our narrator is conscious of and perhaps part of such discourse: scholarly or at least well-read; middle- to upper middle class; and potentially self-aware queer, as, following London's Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885, such discourse necessitated a "language of reticence … obliqueness and indirection [and] covert reference[s]" (qtd. Cartledge 10). We see such underpinnings and lavender prose in Wilde etc. so Sallow's pen does not do this work alone/ from nowhere.

Indeed, just two pages later, Sallow wrestles with "how madly appealing I found [young Mr. Rochester]" during the homosocial dance around Town (Lenk 6). Called to context are more pointed cultural references that continue to affirm Sallow's queerness, and perhaps young Mr. Rochester's. The pair's haunts around London include Chelsea, at young Mr. Rochester's insistence, arguably a Victorian "hipster" district and another subcultural reference to less-than-moral (less-than-virile?) habits, orientations, interests. Again on page 7, Sallow refers to artwork to capture the likeness of his country noble crush, ascribing to him the character of Herakles' known *eromenos*, as seen as protagonist of Waterhouse's "Hylas and the Nymphs."

Ferndean's isolation metaphorizes the isolation of queerness in the Victorian era, as do the hauntings as manifestations of secrets and hidden lives. The unexplainable phenomena always escalate when young Mr. Rochester and Sallow are alone together, "as if [in] the very walls themselves" (14), taking on "masculine qualities" (18), suggesting that as the young men's attraction and closeness grows, anxieties over masculinity and social/moral oppression also grow. However, this is not Ferndean's only explanation; someone is, quite literally, always watching: the first Mr. Rochester, sneaking around in narrow passages within the walls. Thus we are signaled to suspect the "masculine" paranormal interrupting Sallow and young Mr. Rochester's unspoken courtship are actually his father's live reactions to his son's queer inclinations, symbolic of the older generation's shock and despair for the younger generation's celebration of Decadence and moral degeneration. Indeed, even Jane "observes" her son's choices, made in her very own sanctuary red-room and thus watched over by her beloved watercolor painting (Lenk 18-19).

Yet the short story also challenges this idea of isolation and "difference" by refracting Jane and Rochester's unresolved sexual tension: mirroring their proposal scene this time in the gusty Ferndean garden on page 17, Sallow and young Mr. Rochester's relationship deconstructs the Victorians' curated image of propriety by infiltrating the traditional social-constructivist romantic binary and active/passive roles, such as Sallow's "[reinvigoration] by Romance's surge of virile confidence" (23) rising against the Victorian misattribution of effeminacy to the queer man.

Feminist Reading

Here is a different take on Adèle's feelings regarding her adoptive father, emerging quite bitter. This contempt might be interpreted as contempt for men in general, indicated by a general lack of empathy for Sallow upon his arrival and clear distrust in "another John" (8). But this remark also suggests a sense of solidarity in the plight of women, harkening back to the parade of problematic Johns in Jane's life. However, is this remark genuine worry for her adoptive brother, or is it indicative of an allegiance to Jane as her strongest female and maternal role model?

Although Adèle expresses concerns over Jane falling victim to Rochester's oppressive, temperamental romance—indeed, accusing him of driving her mad, as well—there is no textual evidence of this being true, except for young Mr. Rochester's comments on Jane's red-room respite from her husband (18). We can recall from the originary text that not only did Jane always fire back at Rochester, but professed after marriage to be "precisely suited in character" and that "no woman was ever nearer to her mate" (450-51), so it begs the question: is this Adèle's imagination and injury for

being sent away, or does she reveal real abuse and unhappiness that follows the close of Jane's autobiography?

Both possibilities bring to light how the conscious decision to retain Jane's drawing and watercolor on the red-room wall also carries an unconscious intertextual symbolism, as Rochester literally moves—and lives—behind it. Perhaps the specter of the dominating masculine has always haunted Jane, from the first red room to this red-room, inescapable for the Victorian woman. Or perhaps Rochester hides his flaws behind his lovers, manipulates them like a whisper over the shoulder or the voice calling in the wind—perhaps, yet, Jane deliberately shields him, as a character, from the world's denunciation.

The short story proposes victory over the patriarchy in Adèle's revenge against her adoptive father—but falls short of any true feminist triumph by, unfortunately, and inadvertently, falling victim to the equally patriarchal "mad woman/evil woman" trope. Adèle has freed herself from the chains of submission to a reluctant father, the dominance of the masculine, but she is consigned to be the Lady Audley, the age-old threat of the feminine. She is both hero and villain, the manipulator, the "failed cherub" (28) imprisoned herself by sexist archetypes. After all, the man still reclaims power to make his own destiny in the end: Rochester's suicide.

But—never forget—that Jane herself does appear to remain at Ferndean, watching over her son much more benignly than her twice widower husband. Young Mr. Rochester muses bittersweetly on signs of his mother; her spirit appears for Sallow numerous times, first simply as if to make introductions, but gradually urging him to that mysterious attic door. Does she wish for Sallow to

discover Rochester out of this victimized solidarity professed by Adèle, or does she hope to save him from her adopted daughter's vengeance—release others from Rochester, or Rochester from others?

Perhaps it is simply her final push for family, for identity, for peace, for whomever it is she addresses in her last inconclusive exclamation of: "Oh, my poor dears!" (28)

Intertextuality

A simple reading, the traditional gothic/occult perspective observes not only the genre's psychological thrill, but the usual Victorian anxieties over intrusion and lack of control: intrusion of the woman; intrusion of the foreign (French Adèle); intrusion of the queer; intrusion of the Spiritual and immoral. The genre also folds back into intertextual resonances as earlier referenced with Stoker and Braddon. But this resonance of Stoker's Harker, trapped in Transylvania, uncertain with reality, can also be felt in Sallow's psychological stress within Ferndean's halls.

Resonances of *Lady Audley's Secret* or *Turn of the Screw* move throughout the text. Sallow's misgivings with Adèle and her inability to control her emotions or ladylike morality are reminiscent of Robert Audley's suspicions of Lady Audley. Isolation and the danger of its psychological damage calls to mind Henry James' haunted Bly Manor and the young, obsessive governess (perhaps as well a comment on Jane's originary character?), not to mention apparitions on the stairwell or in the attic window à la Bly Manor's tower (James 170-71, 135-36).

Frankenstein and *Great Expectations* are referenced with certainty, although *Great Expectations* is a less explicit connection than Shelley's work, occurring instead as intertextual transformation when young Mr. Rochester and Sallow mention the playhouse "Hebert and Handel's"—not only a callback

to the text itself, but to one of my original adaptation ideas positioning Dickens' characters in a queer-coded space. The mention of Mesmerism connects to *Jack Maggs*; the "Ministry of Occult Occurrences" and Fleet Street menagerist are Victorian Spiritualist entities taken directly from one of my own works, kin of authentic historical entities such as the Metaphysical Society or Ghost Club (of which Dickens was just one notable literary member).

Each of the aforementioned critical readings are in direct conversation with the originary text. Not only are there enduring elements in technique, character, imagery, and context, but also critiques of the originary text such as the absence of certain perspectives; the emblematic Secret In the Attic and New Face In the House; or the sudden and reckless UST between Sallow and young Mr. Rochester, suggestive of toxicities in Rochester and Jane's whirlwind romance. This specific intertextual dialogue might provide foundation for another innovative (reaching?) re-reading of Rochester and Jane's back and forth romance as indication of a beards-type relationship: neither desire, nor can they succeed with, a heteronormative romance due to unspoken queerness more than simply railing against gendered expectations of the day (or reflecting Brontë's own aversion to marriage). Thus, both return to each other burned, literally and figuratively, by attempts to conform, seeking refuge in their mutual understanding. Ironic, also, that Rochester-in-the-walls could be so appalled at an older (barely) man wooing his son around the very age Jane was wooed by himself.

And, of course—with another nod to the Victorian love of flowery language—there is Rochester's final penance: his final punishment exacted, and with poetic justice, confessing to all before "donning that gibbeting garland" (29).

The Rearranged Room: Some Closing Thoughts

The short story "Rochester" closes the drapes on the east-facing windows and moves the armchair closer to the fire. Well-loved books have been plucked from the case and left on the table there; candlelight and firelight dance across heirloom furniture, the freshly replaced floorboards. Peering into the mirror, one can just almost see the old damask divan; the sideboard cabinet needs dusting; the portrait over the mantle has been replaced by a Waterhouse.

Adaptation is an apt place to recall the conversation between content and source, the lingering presence of creative conscious and unconscious. The idea of such authorial resonance—"intent"—does not interfere with or complicate literary criticism, nor does it supplant literary criticism. For example, instead of seeking to interpret Jane's life against a backdrop of Charlotte's life, consider Charlotte's creative process and intuition as a case of authorial resonance:

1) One of Charlotte's earliest stories follows a girl named Ane who must care for her sick mother, a refraction of Charlotte's own new task of "mothering [her sister] in the absence of their own mother," a sense of self as "nurturer rather than the nurtured" which persists in characteristics of figures such as Jane (Pratt 37);

2) Literature which Charlotte consumed in her own childhood, such as the Arabian Nights, cameos in aspects of Jane's character, or the exoticism of Bertha Mason, a refraction of experiences imprinted upon Charlotte's psyche (Dickson 23);

3) Charlotte readily confesses she and her sisters wrote under "positively masculine" pseudonyms, as they had noticed that "authoresses are liable to be looked on with prejudice," a direct

resonance of author's situation within cultural context and a refraction of what the author felt about that situation (Biographical Notice of Ellis and Acton Bell, *Wuthering Heights*);

And 4) as Angela Hague examines in "Charlotte Brontë and Intuitive Consciousness," Charlotte consciously held that the writer's role is "'nominal' in that [the writer] must remain open" to what lies "beyond the boundaries of [the] conscious mind and the work of art" (599).

None of this is to serve as "intent," only to reiterate that there is no true access to an author's psyche and thus no such thing as a full understanding of a text. Instead, authorial resonance is something intuitive, organic and not necessarily intentional: via "specific allusions, aesthetic contexts, and ideological implications," a text—adaptation or originary—makes statements on social and cultural context. Then, the "function of literature is … 'specific condition[s] under which [it] creates meaning and effect'" (qtd. in Schober 37-38). The place where meaning and effect converge: this is the reflection of the rearranged room.

Authorial resonance refracts into events and characters chosen as subject, "rather than any of the others [a writer] could have selected" (Pratt 33). The author processes the world around them, producing discourses contingent on sociocultural codes: "not True in any essential sense, but [producing] the necessary 'truths' of particular cultures" (Fathallah 18). This is perhaps even more crucial in adaptation. Fathallah seeks to enhance ideas of adaptation as politics to "construct a discourse of [adaptation] as art, specifically a postmodern art, worthy of studying like any other literature" (Fathallah 23). If all art is an "open work" (qtd. in Schaff 38), then there is "no clear

separation between source [and adaptation]," but the creation of "possibilities in the text and vice versa" (Fathallah 31), which reflect opportunities for future authorial resonance and adaptations.

As I rearrange the room of *Jane Eyre*, I unearth tensions and fill gaps by providing new perspectives and fulfilling discontent, subverting the happily ever after and prompting readers to think more deeply about character and what lies between the lines. If we are to hold it true that literature, originary or adaptation, reveals cultural truths, then every decision I've made conscious or unconscious in the short story "Rochester" is a reflection: my experiences, my cultural context, my perspectives and "intentions." Analyses that can be made about the originary text via my resonances in this adaptation refract back upon me as an author and as a reader. What is important to me? What is the world around me? How did I respond to the text both consciously and unconsciously: what did I feel was missing, what did I want to expand upon, what did I want to explore?

As Fathallah points out in "From Foucault to Fanfic," the field of literary criticism is beginning to acknowledge the inherent failure in "hastily generaliz[ing]" adaptations as radical; better yet, the field is also beginning to understand these "transformational" and "affirmational" properties which exist "simultaneously and within the same text" (26). D. W. Winnicott's theory of the "play space" underlines the importance of an author comprehending and integrating "psychic and physical experience within the safety of fiction," a transitional space where the production of a text and reading of the text are both creative acts (qtd. in Pratt 38-9).

In "Adaptation as Connection," Schober gathers Fluck, Jenkins, and Greenblatt to demonstrate that literary texts are in constant negotiation and readjustment, necessitated by varied and

contingent references to themselves in "recursive communication processes" at work while reading either originary text or adaptation—that, having entered cultural consciousness, stories are already interconnected, inextricably bound to be engaged with and/or modified: they "only emerge through the combined efforts of sharing knowledge in discursive interaction and negotiation" (36).

In other words, the arrangement and rearrangement and renovation and restoration of the room has never been a solitary act, even when the room itself was built. There was a house to which it was added, places from which the materials were sourced, hands which constructed it. And although it is only one room, it has also been many different rooms; and it will continue to *be* one and many rooms, all at once: *Jane Eyre*, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, "Reader, She Married Me," *Rebecca*—and now, too: "Rochester."

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