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## The Evolution of Jane Eyre

Brooke E. Terry

University of Tennessee - Knoxville, bterry3@utk.edu

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Brooke Terry

Dr. Billone

UHNO 498

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### The Evolution of *Jane Eyre*

Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* often straddles the line between the feminist and the sentimental. On the one hand, the novel is the story of Jane, her struggles, her growth, and her development. She is a strong character who rises from a harsh background and childhood to achieve peace with her decisions and her life. On the other hand, Jane's relationship with Mr. Edward Rochester is central to the book. She calls him "master" on many occasions and, although she is not completely submissive, she does eventually marry him. Indeed, in various film adaptations of the novel, it is this relationship that takes center stage. For example, both Robert Stevenson's 1944 and Cary Fukunaga's 2011 versions of Brontë's iconic work place heavy emphasis on the romance of the story. Both movies remove certain scenes from the tale, and alter some aspects of Jane's story that take the focus away from her and shift it onto her romantic relationship. However, these changed features can often take away from Jane's own progress, such as her growth and development that Brontë charts in the book, and can make her a weaker character because of it. At its core, Brontë's novel is about its compelling title character, and while the 1944 and 2011 film adaptations of the work are successful and faithful to the novel in many ways, they ultimately hurt the representation of Jane's journey.

In simple terms, *Jane Eyre* can be described as a bildungsroman or coming of age story. The novel, published in 1847, carefully follows Jane's story from childhood to adulthood in what Nestor calls an "individualistic narrative," as the story follows only Jane (28). As a child, she is

under the cruel guardianship of her aunt, Mrs. Reed, before being sent to Lowood Institution for hitting her cousin. At Lowood, Jane does receive a good education, though the school setting can be “distressing” and full of “hardships” such as a lack of food and humiliation at the hands of Mr. Brocklehurst (Brontë 59-60). However, she does find friends in Helen and Miss Temple. After spending eight years at Lowood, both as a teacher and as a student, Jane then journeys to Thornfield hall to become governess to Adele, the ward of Mr. Edward Rochester. And while at Thornfield Jane, of course, falls in love with Mr. Rochester. However, at their wedding, it is revealed that Mr. Rochester is already married, but that his wife Bertha has gone mad. Consequently, Jane runs away, eventually finding sanctuary with the Rivers (who are discovered to be her cousins) and a position teaching at a country school. Soon though, St. John Rivers proposes to her, asking her to accompany him as a missionary’s wife, and she declines. She hears Mr. Rochester in the distance, and returns to him. Because of a fire caused by Bertha, he is blind and disabled, but Jane still “married him” and their romance comes full circle (Brontë 488).

Throughout this classic novel, Jane comes into being, both as a character and as a woman. She finds her own employment, and makes her own way in the world. She is not afraid to ask questions, and even refuses St. John’s proposal because she does not want to enter into a loveless marriage. The plot surrounding Jane and Mr. Rochester is, of course, important, as Jane keeps her love for Rochester alive even when she is with the Rivers, but it is not the only plot in *Jane Eyre*. Instead, the novel as a whole combines the many stories of Jane’s life into one narration, and her romance with Rochester only comes into play after she has already started her life’s journey. However, the film versions do not always portray these interconnected stories. They leave out, add, or emphasize certain aspects until “the romantic aspect [is given] the first importance” of the account (Asheim 55).

As one of the first (non-silent) film adaptations of *Jane Eyre*, Robert Stevenson's 1944 version sets a precedent concerning which aspects of the novel to keep, and which to remove. In particular, the movie leaves out many parts of Jane's independent life away from Thornfield. She never teaches at Lowood, the circumstances of her aunt's death are placed after her aborted marriage, and Mary, Diane, and St. John Rivers are completely written out of the script. Instead, the movie is primarily focused on the events at Thornfield Hall. As Bosley Crowther writes in his review, as soon as Jane arrives at the manor, "emphasis is taken away from [her]" (1944). And in the dark, Gothic setting of Thornfield, Orson Welles is "most of the story" and plays Mr. Rochester "in his hot, fuliginous style" (Crowther 1944). Joan Fontaine, who plays the story's true heroine, then "is strangely obscured behind the dark cloud of Rochester's personality" (Crowther 1944). Indeed, this film changes many characteristics of Brontë novel, and the changes would only continue in later adaptations.

Moving forward to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the 2011 film shares both similarities and differences with its 1944 predecessor. For example, neither movie includes the charades scene or the fortuneteller scene at Thornfield. Furthermore, neither movie shows Miss Temple, and both make Lowood institution crueler than it appears in the book. However, the 2011 version is a more faithful adaptation as it includes many key details the earlier film left out, including the Rivers (though the movie starts with their introduction), the correct timing of Mrs. Reed's death, and more realistic representations of Jane's interactions with Bessie, Adele, and other characters. And, as Scott discusses in his review, Mia Wasikowska gives a stronger portrayal of Jane than Joan Fontaine (2011). Wasikowska's Jane "withstands strong crosswinds of feeling and the buffeting of unfair circumstances without self-pity, but also without saintly selflessness" (Scott 2011). Furthermore, Michael Fassbender's Mr. Rochester is "greyhound lean, with a crooked,

cynical smile set in an angular jaw,” but not overbearing (Scott 2011). He “assure[s] the audience and his indomitable co-star that this ‘Jane Eyre’ belongs, as it should, to Jane,” and yet, at the same time, the movie is still primarily concerned with the romance of Jane and Rochester. Their relationship is more passionate and drawn out in the film than in the novel, and, though this Jane is a stronger character, her independence occasionally takes a back seat to her romance. Overall, there are instances in both films where Jane fails to live up to the expectations of her novel counterpart.

In many ways, Jane’s time at Lowood Institution acts as the start of her journey to independence in Brontë’s novel. For one, her time at the school was not always easy. Particularly in her “first quarter,” when Mr. Brocklehurst was still in charge, Jane had “an irksome struggle with difficulties in habituating [herself] to new rules and unwonted tasks” (Brontë 59). Mr. Brocklehurst, who believed Mrs. Reed’s lies of Jane’s wickedness, humiliates Jane, and many girls at the school die under his guardianship. One of those girls was Helen, who offered Jane “intellectual companionship, moral guidance, and a constancy of affection” (Nestor 34). And it is this relationship that begins to turn Jane’s experience at Lowood into something positive. Though Helen dies, she does act as Jane’s first real friend, and helps Jane both in an academic sense (through their love of literature) and an ethical sense (through Helen’s tremendous faith and virtue). Helen also introduces Jane to Miss Temple, who acts as a role model for Jane and who protects her from the harsh nature of Mr. Brocklehurst (Nestor 34). Therefore, not only does Lowood provide Jane with the education and experiences she needs to be a governess, but it also introduces her to characters who would shape her personality, encourage her independence, and aid her moral growth. However, though these characters and occurrences are vital parts of the book, the film versions change Jane’s time at school.

Unlike what happens in the novel, when it comes to Lowood, neither the 1944 film nor the 2011 film quite live up to the Jane's written account of her experiences. For one, both movies leave out Miss Temple, depriving Jane of a positive female role model early in life. Furthermore, both make Lowood seem more forbidding than Brontë's descriptions. Especially in the 1944 version, Mr. Brocklehurst never leaves the Institution and so Jane is subjected to his cruelty for a number of years, making viewers wonder how her independent nature could have survived. And indeed, the Jane of the 1944 is less independent and experienced than the Jane of the novel, as she never teaches at Lowood and lets Mr. Rochester dominate her in future scenes. Overall, both movies use Lowood as a time of pity for Jane. She is embarrassed and mistreated, and neither film quite shows Jane becoming the strong woman who decides to travel after her role model and friend, Miss Temple, leaves the school. And once at Thornfield, even more differences in Jane's narrative become apparent.

Once Jane arrives at Thornfield, the true focus of the film versions becomes obvious. In the novel, Jane's time at Thornfield is indeed defined by her relationship with Mr. Rochester. Other plot points and characters, such as Jane's relationship with Adele and the party hosted at the manor, are certainly considerable, but the budding relationship between governess and employer is the principal part of this portion of Jane's journey. However, despite this significance in the novel, both the 1944 and the 2011 movies completely overdo their focus on Jane and Rochester. Both movies leave out almost everything at Thornfield not associated with the relationship, and characterize both Jane and Mr. Rochester in ways that do not always fit with their book counterparts. In the novel, the relationship is, of course, fraught with "possession and power" as well as "struggle and fear" (Nestor 56-57). It's not perfect, but the movies depict a relationship that is, in many ways, even more broken and dramatic.

One aspect of the novel that both film versions (1944 and 2011) leave out is the charades scene, featuring Blanche Ingram dressing up as a bride. This scene is crucial because it highlights the pseudo love triangle between Blanche, Jane, and Mr. Rochester. And since, as Nestor states, “jealousy, which is concerned more with ownership than with love, plays an important role in *Jane Eyre*,” cutting this scene alters Brontë’s vision of Jane and Mr. Rochester’s early relationship (57). In this case, Jane’s jealousy can only be hinted at, and, in the films, she is not given a scene where her emotions can fully play out. Furthermore, taking out this scene lessens Jane’s importance as audience members are not given a chance to “compare” her to Blanche, even though Brontë wrote several scenes allowing her readers to do just that. In many ways, Blanche would have been a better wife for Rochester because of her social standing, and acting out a marriage would have emphasized how unique Rochester’s choice was. The moment would have also given a chance for other characters to make their presence known, but, instead, the filmmakers decide to focus on other parts of the classic romance.

Yet another change in the film versions of *Jane Eyre* concerns Jane’s family. For the most part, both the 1944 and 2011 movies provide adequate focus on Jane’s early life with her Aunt Sarah Reed and cousins John, Eliza, and Georgiana. In both films, young Jane shows enough “rebelliousness and defiance” to match up with the novel, and thus portray Jane as the “brave” and opinionated child that Brontë illustrates (Ellis and Kaplan 195). However, it is Jane’s paternal family, the Eyre’s, who are left out. Late in the novel, Jane discovers that Mary, Diana, and St. John Rivers, the siblings who saved her after leaving Thornfield, are actually her cousins. In the 2011 film, this relationship is never clarified, and the 1944 film does not even introduce the Rivers. Instead, the Stevenson film features Dr. Rivers, who comforts and protects Jane at Lowood. He acts as Miss Temple does in the books and, like St. John Rivers, provides

Jane with a “virtuous male figure” that “tries to undermine Jane’s independent spirit” (Ellis and Kaplan 195). As Ellis and Kaplan argue:

One can only speculate on the reasons for a change like this: balancing the hateful Brocklehurst with the kindly Rivers mitigates an absolute condemnation of male authority that might be implied. Rivers is the good father for Jane canceling out the bad one. Yet Brontë had been more interested in Miss Temple as the good mother balancing out Mrs. Reed, the bad one. The [1944] film, in removing one side of this balance, represses the mother who in the novel brought about Jane’s growth. Male authority is left supreme. (Ellis and Kaplan 196)

Then looking at the 2011 version, the Fukunaga film mainly focuses on Jane’s relationship with St. John and his eventual proposal. She has little contact with the female Rivers and St. John is primarily used as a foil to Mr. Rochester. And though both films do mention Jane’s wealthy uncle who leaves her a fortune, neither examines the power and freedom afforded to Jane by this inheritance that she rejoices about in the novel. Instead, both films use the family Jane does have as a way to emphasize her relationship with Rochester and how her defiance and spirit wanes over the course of both films.

As with any movie, casting was essential to the 1944 and 2011 *Jane Eyre* films. And with casting, the filmmakers can make it clear how they want their characters to be perceived, both by their audience and in their specific time period. In the 1944 movie, Joan Fontaine plays a more “submissive” Jane than Mia Wasikowska’s 2011 version (Ellis and Kaplan 195). In addition, Orson Welles’ Mr. Rochester in 1944 is far more dominant than Michael Fassbender’s in 2011. And through these actors, both films characterize Jane and her love interest in a way that both parallels and refutes the original novel.



In the 1944 film version, Peggy Ann Garner plays young Jane and Joan Fontaine plays adult Jane. In the early scenes, Garner accurately plays out Jane's defining characteristics. She is rebellious and independent, and wants to have her own life. However, once Jane leaves Lowood for Thornfield, these characteristics are lost. Instead, Jane becomes "passive" and the directing consciousness becomes Rochester's, in a complete reversal of the situation in the novel (Ellis and Kaplan 196). Brontë's Jane is not afraid to speak up to Rochester or let her opinions be known. In fact, during many of their conversations she actively engages him in discussion and does not always agree with him. However, in the 1944 version "Jane is placed as Rochester's observer" and Fontaine plays Jane with "subordination and passivity" (Ellis and Kaplan 196). For certain roles, such as Fontaine's part in Hitchcock's 1940 film *Rebecca*, this "naturally subservient and self-effacing style" works in Fontaine's favor (Ellis and Kaplan 197). However, in this instance that less dominant nature does not fit with Jane's story, and, instead of being front and center throughout the film, Fontaine's character is often placed below Mr. Rochester, in a corner with Adele, or behind some of the other characters (Ellis and Kaplan 197-198). And indeed, when on screen, specifically with her love interest, she always seems to be looking up at Rochester, allowing Orson Welles' character to control the film.

In contrast to Fontaine, Orson Welles "dominates whatever scene he is in" as Mr. Rochester (Ellis and Kaplan 196). The camera always focuses on him, which Welles himself may have requested, and it is his story, not Jane's, that takes over at Thornfield (Ellis and Kaplan 196). And in some ways, these characteristics make him an ideal Rochester. He's moody, sort of a recluse who "mumbles," and acts with "studied arrogance, the restless moods of a medieval king carrying his own soul on a halberd and demanding that everybody look at it" (Crowther). Like the Mr. Rochester of the novel, Welles plays a dark hero. However, though may fit with

some of Rochester's characterizations, he completely overtakes Jane's voice. As Crowther reviews, Jane "becomes, as it were, a hypnotic under his Svengali spell, and exists in a world of shapeless horrors which are governed entirely by him," and changes from the more independent version of herself presented in the book (1944).

Compared to Joan Fontaine in the 1944 *Jane Eyre*, Mia Wasikowska plays her Jane in a way that more closely resembles Brontë's original heroine. As Scott puts it, she "fulfills the imperative of plainness with a tight-lipped frown, a creased brow and severely parted hair" and "is a perfect Jane for this film and its moment" (Scott 2011). She looks like Jane and acts like Jane, and her experience playing other headstrong Victorian heroines, like Alice in Tim Burton's 2010 version of *Alice in Wonderland*, makes her fit the role very well. Furthermore, she embodies both Jane's "independent temperament" and her selflessness (Scott 2011). Indeed, as it should be, Wasikowska is the star of the 2011 version of *Jane Eyre*. However, like Fontaine's portrayal in 1944, this Jane Eyre is still very much tied to her Mr. Rochester, and the actors who play Edward have incredible influence over their respective co-stars.

In his review of the 2011 film, Scott actually refers back to Orson Welles' depiction of Mr. Rochester, calling it an "overscaled embrace" (Scott 2011). He much prefers Michael Fassbender's representation, as he argues that it keeps the focus on Wasikowska's Jane. This Mr. Rochester is still smoldering as the "dashing, wounded, cynical, wild and yet somehow redeemable" love interest, but it is not his story that takes center stage (Scott 2011). Instead, he lets Jane be the star. And even looking at the credits for both films, this key difference is apparent. For the 1944 version, Orson Welles is listed before Joan Fontaine in the credits even though, going off the title of both the movie and the novel, Fontaine should be the star. In contrast, the 2011 version does give Mia Wasikowska the top credit spot, with Michael

Fassbender coming second. Just this order reveals so much about how the movies are attempting to show the original text, and each edition of the story (the novel and the films) gives its own glimpse into societal values and norms of each respective time period.

As a heroine, the Jane of Brontë's 1847 novel was not exactly typical. As Moglen points out, she was indeed "orphaned, poor, and plain," qualities that stay with her throughout each movie adaptation (484). More than that however, she "defied the conventions of both fiction and society" and acted as one of the Victorian era's first feminist "antiheroine[s]" (Moglen 484). She's a very human character, and, by appearing to be more than a wife, she embodies a woman who is more than just the man she marries. And since "marriageability" was a very important characteristics required of young ladies in the Brontë's time, to have a lead, female character who makes her own life outside of marriage, even if she does become a wife in the end, makes Jane an exceptional character. In both Victorian times and more modern times, her appeal is based on this kind of feminist ideal, and how she is accepted and portrayed reveals the role of women and the role of feminism in changing cultures.

When considering reactions to *Jane Eyre* from its own time period, the mid-nineteenth century, it becomes apparent that the novel not only shattered norms about femininity, but also about sexuality. As Gilbert describes in her article, "*Jane Eyre* tells a shifting almost phantasmagoric series of stories about the perils and possibilities of sexual passion" (Gilbert 357). Their relationship was intense, and Victorian reactions to the desires of both Jane and Mr. Rochester were varied, as Jane never shies away from sharing her exact thoughts and wants with Edward. And while some considered Jane a prude for not always giving into Rochester's advances, many were simply scandalized by the discussion of a heroine who was "frankly desirous" (Gilbert 356). However, her desires also bring into question her role as a feminist icon.

As Gilbert further points out, many readers, both from the Victorian era and more modern time periods, “wanted more than anything for [Jane] to run off with [Mr. Rochester] to the south of France, or even indeed to the moon,” (Gilbert 355). And she does, eventually marry Mr. Rochester, which complicates her role as the spirited anti-Victorian, anti-heroine who makes her own way in the world.

As the novel itself shows, women living in Jane’s time were almost required to either get married or commit themselves to education. For example, Blanche Ingram and the other well to do ladies of the novel are looking for a husband, but essentially every other female character is relegated to being a teacher or governess of some sort. And since Jane fulfills both of these Victorian stereotypes, it is easy to see why some critics may classify her as adhering to a male-dominated society. However, other critics, like Yeazell, insist that her marriage to and relationship with Mr. Rochester is all part of Jane’s growth. Specifically, she says:

The language and structure of *Jane Eyre* make of its concluding marriage an emblem of the intimate connection between independence and love. Bronte does not allow Jane to sacrifice her values or her self to Rochester's passion; only after Jane has become, in her own words, an "independent woman," are she and Rochester reunited. (Yeazell 34)

In this way, Jane rejects the values of her society, and turns what could be a standard story from the 1800s into something more by refusing to always bow to her “strong, sexually compelling ‘master,’” and by being more than her later movie counterparts allow her to be (Yeazell 34).

In comparing the novel to the 1944 film version, it is important to remember the time period of the movie. Stevenson’s film was produced in 1944, right at the end of World War II, and thus the world was entering a new era. During the war, many women had taken factory or other positions to make up for the men who were fighting on the front lines. However, by the

time the movie came out, “women were now being told to go back to their husbands and children” (Ellis and Kaplan 195). Therefore, as Ellis and Kaplan discuss, “it is thus not surprising to find Joan Fontaine playing a very meek, docile, and submissive Jane” (Ellis and Kaplan 195). The post-war period leaned toward and supported the “patriarchy” and so showing Jane as a fully feminist icon would have gone against what viewers wanted and expected at the time (Ellis and Kaplan 195). In addition, the movie, while definitely focusing on the love story in *Jane Eyre*, was also used to showcase other common aspects of 1940s cinema.

In addition to being considered a feminist novel, *Jane Eyre* is also considered a Gothic novel. And though the 1944 film does not quite fully achieve the feminist aspects of the novel, it does create a Gothic vision. As Ellis and Kaplan explain, “the use of high contrast in this black and white film also brings out the Gothicism of a book in which the room where a man dies is filled with secrets and a mad woman is confined to an attic” (195). Furthermore, the setting of Thornfield, a huge, rugged castle with mysterious stairwells and turrets highlights the Gothic setting. And because the film noir was popular during this time, the menace of the novel comes out in a way that is distinct to this period of cinematic history (Ellis and Kaplan 195). So, overall, though the 1944 does not portray its characters in a way that is true to the book, its setting does do justice to Brontë’s mysterious and Gothic work.

Compared to 1944, the year 2011 did not necessarily have any events that would lead to an anti-feminist portrayal of *Jane Eyre*. Both men and women worked in a variety of vocations, and there were no events like World War II that would have forced one gender out of a position. In addition, women as a whole had more power and influence in 2011 than they did in 1944, in politics, in the work place, and in society. And yet, in the 2011 film, like the 1944 film, there is a continued “emphasis upon the love story” (Asheim 54). Jane’s story as a whole, though not as

diminished as in the 1944 version, still shows that “Hollywood,” and indeed society, is focused more on romance than a single woman’s journey (Asheim 54). And further examination of 2011 reveals that, although women’s rights have certainly gained strides, women still make less money than men, are still less involved in politics than men, and, to a certain extent, are still more expected to get married and have a family, like Jane does in the novel and as hinted at with the ending of the 2011 film. Jane does get a more feministic portrayal in the 2011 film, as she is stronger than her 1944 counterpart, however, her story in the novel comprises of more than just the love story of the screen. But, like earlier film, the 2011 version was also used to show other aspects of cinema than just Hollywood’s obsession with romantic movies.

Like the 1944 film, with its focus on the Gothic, film noir style, the 2011 movie represents what filmmakers value when creating different period movies such as *Jane Eyre*. So, though the movie does not quite include everything from the novel pertaining to plot and characters, it does capture what could be the look of a Victorian story. And by making the settings, costumes, and other aspects of cinematography highlights of the film, Scott describes that:

The wild and misty moors, thanks to the painterly eye of the cinematographer, Adriano Goldman, certainly look beautiful, and Dario Marianelli’s music strikes all the right chords of dread, tenderness and longing. Brontë’s themes and moods — the modulations of terror and wit, the matter-of-fact recitation of events giving way to feverish breathlessness — are carefully preserved, though her narrative has been somewhat scrambled. (Scott)

Therefore, using the structure and flow of the movie, the director, Cary Fukunaga, manages to keep Brontë’s humor, intelligence, and emotions alive, despite primarily focusing on only the

love triangle. Furthermore, the film has been regarded as an excellent period piece, accurately portraying some of the dress and customs of the Victorian times. Michael O'Connor, the costume designer, was even nominated for several awards, including an Academy Award (IMBd). In this way, the Fukunaga and his crew show their dedication to making a good, visually appealing movie. The aesthetics are something they, and many other filmmakers and moviegoers, value in the modern age of computer edited and generated movies. Stevenson, who directed the 1944 film, was not as concerned with the visuals as technology was more limited in their times, and so focused on other aspects of Jane's story.

Over the years, *Jane Eyre* has gone through numerous revisions and changes, and what started out as feminist novel by a Victorian has turned into a cultural icon. Jane has been in plays and movies, most notably Robert Stevenson's 1944 and Cary Fukunaga's 2011 versions of Brontë's work. However, though Jane herself remains present in the different adaptations, her personality, the people around her, and her narrative have been altered. Most notably, the movies focus on only the romance, whereas the novel focuses on Jane's overall life and journey. Jane's compelling growth is often ignored to concentrate on Orson Welles' Mr. Rochester in the 1944 film, or the scenery and costuming of the 2011 version. Both movies remove essential elements of Jane's life that help her become Brontë's beloved heroine, including some of her female relationships and her life outside of Thornfield. And though the movies are good and were relatively well received by their audiences of the time, the neglect significant parts of Jane's story. As one reviewer puts it, "some would argue that only a five-hour TV mini-series could do justice to the tone, detail and character development of Brontë's triple-decker Victorian novel," and yet filmmakers and fans still attempt to create or imagine the perfect Jane (French 2011). In that light, I will now attempt to create my own "ideal" *Jane Eyre*, by discussing the casting,

changes to the novel, and other aspects of a movie I would make if I were to direct a film adaptation of this classic.



## Casting

### Jane Eyre

Though she has flown under the radar since the last *Chronicles of Narnia* film, I would cast Anna Popplewell as my Jane Eyre. Anna played Susan Pevensie in the Narnia films, and, as Susan, portrayed an intelligent female character who was not afraid to be strong, just like Jane. At 25, Anna is just about at the age of most actresses who have played Jane, and fits the traditional plain, but not too plain, look of Jane Eyre. In addition, Anna recently graduated from Oxford University with a degree in English Literature, meaning she has a background in the work of the Victorian period. Overall, Jane, is of course, the hardest character to cast. However, I feel that Anna, with her academic background and past experience, could handle the challenge and make the character her own (“Anna Popplewell”).

### Mr. Rochester

I think an interesting choice for Mr. Rochester would be Henry Cavill. Cavill is a rising British actor, and has most recently played Superman in *Man of Steel*. Although playing a superhero is quite different than playing the moody Mr. Rochester, Cavill’s background in such period pieces as “The Tudors” make him a more ideal fit for Jane’s love interest. In addition, I feel that Cavill definitely has the look of Mr. Rochester, and can pull off the dark, broody master without overshadowing his more important female costar (“Henry Cavill”).

### Mrs. Reed

For Mrs. Reed, Jane’s cruel aunt, I would cast Fiona Shaw. Shaw is most well known for her role of Aunt Petunia in the *Harry Potter* films, showing she has

experience playing aunts who are forced to become unwilling guardians. In addition, she attended the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art and has training in Shakespeare and other stage work, giving her the needed background to take on a role in this older, more traditional story (“Fiona Shaw”).

#### Mr. Brocklehurst

In what may be a controversial choice, I would cast Donald Sutherland as Mr. Brocklehurst. Sutherland, though a prolific actor, is not British, and may be a little old for the role. However, I think his roles as Mr. Bennett in *Pride and Prejudice* (2005) and as President Snow in *The Hunger Games* films demonstrate that he can play a patriarchal figure who also happens to be a rather domineering and cruel leader. And, of course, he wouldn’t be the first actor to fake an accent.

#### Helen Burns

As one of the younger characters, finding a child actress to portray the mature Helen Burns can be difficult. However, I believe Lucy Hutchinson would be a good fit for the role. At only ten years old, she fits the profile of Helen very well. In addition, Lucy already has a number of acting roles under her belt, and may be ready to transition into feature films (“Lucy Hutchinson”).

#### Miss Temple

For Miss Temple (who I would definitely keep in a film version of the novel, unlike the 1944 and 2011 movies), I would cast Kate Winslet. Kate is an Oscar-winner, and is perhaps most well known for her role in *Titanic*. Age-wise she could easily portray Miss Temple, as the younger superintendent of Lowood who does eventually marry. She is also a versatile actress, starring in a variety of roles

and her experiences make her ideal for any part. Overall, I feel that she would embody the kind, respectful, and educated Miss Temple quite gracefully.

#### Mrs. Fairfax

Like the 2011 film, I would cast Judi Dench as Mrs. Fairfax. She is a legendary British actress, and has won many awards (including an Oscar) in her illustrious career. Her filmography is extensive, from James Bond to *Shakespeare in Love*, and she has proven herself capable of playing matriarchal figures (she even played Lady Catherine in the 2005 film version of *Pride and Prejudice*). And since *Jane Eyre* is a classic British novel, it only makes sense to include a classic British actress in the cast list (“Judi Dench).

#### Adele

As mentioned when discussing my casting choice for Helen, it can be difficult to find well-known child actresses to cast in such movies as *Jane Eyre*, which can be considered a mature movie for an older audience. However, for Adele, I feel that Isabelle Allen would be an ideal choice. She is most well known for playing a young Cosette in *Les Misérables* (2012). Her role in the film was small, but important, and she showed both her acting and singing talents by playing the innocent and youthful Cosette. Playing the equally innocent, but not quite as important, Adele would give her an in into bigger movies and would give this up and coming child star a chance to shine.

#### Bertha Mason

To try something new (especially since the 1944 film does not even show Bertha Mason and the 2011 movie only provides glimpses), I would cast Helena Bonham Carter as Bertha, and give her more screen time than perhaps other versions

might. Bertha is an intriguing character, though she wrecks the romantic image most other versions focus, and deserves to be a greater part of the story. Carter has proven herself capable of playing women who are a little bit off (such as Bellatrix Lestrange in the *Harry Potter* films or Mrs. Lovett in *Sweeney Todd*) and I believe her experience would help bring Bertha to life in a new and unique way.

#### Blanche Ingram

For Blanche Ingram, I would cast Carey Mulligan. Most well known for playing Kitty Bennett in *Pride and Prejudice* and Daisy in *The Great Gatsby*, Mulligan has excelled in period pieces. In addition, her look fits the Blanche Ingram look, and I believe she could play the rich, Mrs. Rochester wannabe. The role would be another great opportunity for her, and her Blanche could play off the dark of Mr. Rochester.

#### St. John Rivers

For St. John, I would cast Arthur Darvill. Arthur Darvill is most well-known for playing Rory Williams on *Doctor Who*, but recently he can be seen as a reverend on the BBC's *Broadchurch* and in various theater productions. He has a similar look to Jamie Bell, who played St. John in the 2011 version, and his work as both the long-suffering yet dedicated Rory and an actual minister demonstrate his ability to channel the God-fearing, India bound missionary. Overall though, Darvill is another rising British actor who I think should have an opportunity to part in what is a quintessential British story.

#### Comparisons to the 1944 Film

As with any film adaptation of a novel, the 1944 film had some parts that were well done, and other aspects that may not have fit with the novel's original intent. And in this case, I would attempt to stick more closely to the novel than the 1944 film. For example, I would keep Miss Temple and the Rivers, as I think these characters play important parts in Jane's journey. In addition, some parts of the 1944 movie, such as Jane being approached by an interested man while traveling to Thornfield, seemed to have only been added to romanticize Jane and enhance her need for a husband like Mr. Rochester. These aspects did not really need to be added, and this took the focus away from Jane as an independent character. However, the 1944 filmmakers did make some stylistic choices that I felt worked well for the story. For one, they kept the Gothic feel of the book. Thornfield was suitably mysterious, and the *film noir* style helped maintain an air of mystery around Mr. Rochester and his past. These are elements I would like in a movie version of *Jane Eyre*. It is a Gothic novel, and I would keep those elements by choosing a Thornfield similar, though a little lighter, than the setting chosen for this film, and by heightening the mystery surrounding Bertha and her wanderings. In addition, the 1944 featured Jane doing voiceover readings from her story. What she read did not actually come from the novel, which fundamentally changed the plotline, but I think the concept of having Jane do voiceovers would work well, as Brontë does write from Jane's introspective point of view. This technique would also help audience members who are less familiar with the novel follow along and enjoy Jane's tale more thoroughly.

#### Comparisons to the 2011 Film

There were many aspects of the 2011 *Jane Eyre* that should be adhered concerning all film adaptations of novels, namely an attention to detail. From the clothing to the set, to

the language, everything about the movie showed the filmmakers dedication replicating Victorian England in the best way possible. In addition, the filmmakers actually chose to show Bertha Mason, something I would definitely incorporate into a film to keep up the Gothic premise and work with the theme of the mysterious woman in the attic. However, like the 1944 film, the 2011 version also leaves out the key character of Miss Temple. Moreover, the ending is rather anticlimactic. There is just a simple reunion between Jane and Mr. Rochester, only further reinforcing the idea that Jane's story is tied to Mr. Rochester in a way that it isn't in a novel. To that end, expanding the ending, telling it from Jane's voice and going beyond just a reunion, maybe even showing her child or the way she is a strong, nonsubmissive force in her marriage, would help bring to light her development and the end of her story.

#### Comparisons to the novel

Although every part of *Jane Eyre* can be considered important in some way, it is still a 400-500 page novel (depending on the edition) that cannot be fully adapted into a 2½ hour movie without something being cut. Therefore, some things have to be streamlined and some things have to be removed altogether. In terms of streamlining, I think both the beginning scenes of Jane at Gateshead Hall and her time actually teaching Adele could be condensed into just one or two scenes. The movie could even start with Jane already being taken to the Red Room, while Bessie explains Jane's fight with her cousin. Then, since audiences would not see Jane reading the book that her cousin claimed was his, showing Jane's early interest in learning, she could then maybe read the book on her journey to Lowood. Similarly, the time between Jane's arrival at Thornfield and Mr. Rochester's arrival could be shortened, as she just needs enough time to settle into her job

and understand some of the mystery surrounding the house. In addition, though I would keep the charades scene (unlike the film versions) it, and the interactions between Mr. Rochester and Blanche Ingram would have less focus, as Jane should always be the center of the story. However, one addition I would make to the novel would be providing audiences with more glimpses of Bertha. She is a fascinating, mysterious character who does eventually drive Jane out and into another stage of her life. Actually seeing her more would heighten the Gothic and make the focus not just on the love story, but on Jane's overall experience at Thornfield.

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