jayneyre@window

READER, I E-MAILED HER. In her reply she said that she has been very disappointed with all the movies she has seen about her life, and that she has decided to take matters into her own hands and develop a CD-Rom. Setting aside for the time being the need for $500,000 development funds, we began a lengthy correspondence on the subject.

She sees her life as a pilgrimage, as a search for a home (indeed, for a house—she has been an intrepid house-hunter), and has, she believes, found her true place at the lighted window of the computer, using the new program Governess.

Confined as I am to these words on the pages of a book, I nevertheless wish to discuss with you some of the ideas we have come up with in our correspondence.

For many years Jane believed herself to be an orphan with no family and few prospects, until she learned, after many difficult and heartbreaking experiences, that she was in fact a woman of means. She also (after the most dramatic set-backs) married the man of her dreams, although not until after he had been severely injured and was crippled and blind.

She has always been an observer, a person who likes nothing better than sitting in a window-seat and watching the weather and the countryside, as well as a painter, writer and teacher, and woman of action. Added to that she knows so much about architecture and furnishing that she would do well to go into real estate and interior design.

'A spare parlour and bedroom I refurnished entirely, with old

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> mahogany and crimson upholstery; I laid canvas on the passage, and carpets on the stairs.' Ch. 34

Take for example this piece from chapter one of her story: I mounted into the window-seat: gathering up my feet, I sat cross-legged, like a Turk; and, having drawn the red moreen curtain close, I was shrined in double retirement. Folds of scarlet drapery shut out my view to the right hand; to the left were the clear panes of glass, protecting but not separating me from the drear November day. At intervals, while turning over the leaves of my book, I studied the aspect of that winter afternoon.

Unable to go for a walk, she studies the world in and from the window-seat, and then she sets out on the voyage of her life, the walk that will take her from this house, Gateshead on to Lowood school, thence to Thornfield Hall, and then to Moor House and ultimately to the manor house of Ferndean, with, as I suggested before, many a sorry detour.

I found it necessary to explain to Jane that the early scene in the window-seat comes over to any post-Freudian reader as a back-to-the-womb type deal with red moreen cervix and labia and so forth. She then pointed out to me that the womb had a nice plate-glass panel through which she could check the weather, but she conceded that it was a womb of sorts. A gesture towards the test-tube baby, perhaps. But certainly a signal to a reader, even a pre-Freudian reader, that the tale to be told, while possibly depicting the true events of the life, will have much of the quality of a dream, of a visit to an unconscious mind. I referred her to the first page of Simone de Beauvoir's *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter* where there is the statement: 'Our apartment was red', and then the description of the red upholstery, silk hangings, stained glass, velvet curtains. Jane was enraptured, and when it got to the knee-hole under Simone's father's desk, she said it was, in a curious way, as if she was reading about herself.

Taking our cue from Jane's window-seat, we decided to highlight every window in the text, and lo and behold the thing was—what shall I say—riddled, bejewelled—with fenestration.

Imagine then, the CD-Rom. Click on window in the opening paragraph and you will discover a lengthy menu of other windows you might care to know about in the story. I should say here that references such as Simone de Beauvoir and Freud and such will be marked in the text and will give access to a wealth of information when the user clicks on them. A window is a wind-eye, the word coming from Old Norse 'vindauga' meaning a small hole in a wall through which air and light and images can pass. The sheet of glass you place between yourself and the outside world is a membrane which sep-

arates you from the action while giving you a framed version of the way things are. When you are outside looking in by the window, the glass is a barrier to the world within. To break a window is to violate a taboo, to rend the veil that hangs across a threshold marking the boundary between inside and out.

Left alone, I walked to the window; but nothing was to be seen thence: twilight and snowflakes together thickened the air, and hid the very shrubs on the lawn. I let down the curtain and went back to the fireside. (Ch. 13)

I went to the window-seat and fell to breathing on the frost-flowers with which the window was fretted, and thus clearing a space in the glass through which I might look out on the grounds, where all was still and petrified under the influence of a hard frost. (Ch. 4)

You see the kind of thing. And you will also have noticed that the world away from the fireside is prone to frost and ice and snow. Of course the CD-Rom can bring you coloured pictures of what Jane could see when she looked out her various windows. Hungry robins and leafless cherry trees. Photographs of the English countryside in winter. You could have clips from the movies which Jane herself holds in such low esteem.

Think how it would be, while watching a close-up, perhaps an animation, of hands being washed and taking out splendid shreds of silk and satin and making a bonnet for a doll, to hear Bessie singing the ballad in chapter three:
My feet they are sore, and my limbs they are weary;

Long is the way, and the mountains are wild;

Soon will the twilight close moonless and dreary

Over the path of the poor orphan child. Once again the dramatic contrast between the sweet softness, artifice and luxury of the indoor activity, and the chilly realities of the world outside, the world into which Jane must go if she is to make her way, make herself, realise her dreams and possibilities. The sentiments of Bessy's song are echoed in Jane's life story at the time when she has left Thornfield Hall and is in danger of wandering the roads until she dies.

It is drama that propels Jane, the poor orphan child, into the moonless twilight to begin her pilgrimage. There's the battle with John Reed and the imprisonment in the red-room, and the fit she has in that room, and her subsequent banishment to Lowood school. From the red curtained window-seat to the red curtained prison of her late uncle's death-chamber. The indoors may be womb-red, but it is also hell-red. The fires of Jane's own anger burn brightly within her so that the red of her cell mirrors her own state of mind. It is really quite unusual for a prison cell to be red, the colour adding a dread-

ful dimension to the cloistered room. And just as the word window is a tag for the CD-Rom, so is the word red. The text is drenched in redness—crimson, scarlet, ruby, cherry, mahogany, pink, rose. Red.

Take her away to the red-room and lock her in there.

This, surely one of the most awful sentences ever spoken, from Mrs Reed in Chapter one.

What you really need here is some virtual reality so that a reader can be locked in the red-room. Take the reader away to the red-room and lock her in there.

Red is the colour which appears at the lower or least refracted end of the visible spectrum, and is familiar as the colour of blood, fire, the sun, the poppy, the rose and ripe fruits. Red is for danger; it is the colour of calamity, murder, sacrifice. It represents the king, the masculine, active principle, but also the red goddess, governor of the red events of birth and death. Sexual excitement, anger, love, health, vibrant life and dynamic emotion. As with window, there is a long menu for red.

Mr Reed died in the red-room, nine years before Jane was put there to punish her, and the room contains his bed, like a tabernacle, its massive pillars of mahogany hung with deep red damask curtains. The bed is still furnished with white mattresses and pillows, covered with a white quilt. A white chair and footstool resemble a pale throne. The bed and chair loom and glare in the gloom of the chamber where the walls are pinkish fawn. The carpet is red, and the curtains at the two large windows are festoons and shrouds of the same deep red damask as the the bed. Wardrobe, chairs and toilet table are of mahogany, solid, glowing red. This is nightmare land. The wardrobe contains a secret drawer where Mrs Reed keeps documents, jewls and a miniature of Mr Reed. I wondered how Jane knew about this, but she said she couldn't remember. Wardrobes, an obvious spot for hiding important or shameful secrets, feature prominently in the story, but not as prominently as windows.

The bed rose before her. On her right she had the wardrobe with its subdued and broken reflections, with on her left the windows with the blinds down and the terrible red curtains. Between the curtains was a great looking-glass in which she could see the 'vacant mystery of the bed and room'. Everything looked colder and darker in the mirror, and she could see her white face and arms, and her own glittering eyes of fear, the sole objects moving in the room. She resembled a ghost, a tiny phantom, half fairy, half imp, like one of the creatures in Bessie's evening stories coming from lone, ferny dells in the moors and appearing before the eyes of belated travellers.

You will notice how very particular Jane is about giving you her position

in the room. She is forever doing this, and telling you about going through doorways, entering this room or that room—a bit like giving stage directions. She hears clocks and bells and thereby knows what hour it is and what this means, and what she has to do. The church bells and ticking, chiming clocks are very useful and atmospheric on the CD-Rom.

She shook her hair out of her eyes and looked away from the mirror into the room where she thought she saw a ghost, heard the rushing of wings, felt a presence, began to choke, rushed to the door and shook the lock, screamed and fell down in a fit. Then all hell really did break loose, and after her delivery from the red-room, she was, in due course, sent off to school.

There is much to explore in the red-room, but before we do that, let's look at a couple of other items from the red menu. The red is often associated with fire and light. We were, as I have said, in the dining-room: the lustre, which had been lit for dinner, filled the room with a festal breadth of light; the large fire was all red and clear; the purple curtains hung rich and ample before the lofty window and loftier arch; everything was still, save the subdued chat of Adele (she dared not speak out loud), and, filling up each pause, the beating of winter rain against the panes. (Ch. 14)

I crushed his hand, which was ever hunting mine, vigorously, and thrust it back to him red with the passionate pressure. (Ch. 24) (Jane and I discussed the sad irony of this, in the light of what happened to Edward's hand later on.)

Jane saw her image in the red-room mirror, and fancied herself to be half imp and half fairy. And, as if he sees her mirror-image too, Rochester first and often characterises her in this way. Jane is out at sunset (the sun sinks crimson behind the trees), watching the rising moon and the blue smoke of the chimneys when she hears in the distance the metallic clatter of a horse with its rider. She thinks this is ominous and spooky, and then she is startled by a black and white Newfoundland dog, followed by the horse. They pass her, but then the horse slips on the ice, bringing the rider down. She goes to help him and discovers by the light of the moon that he is dark, stern with angry eyes. He goes his way and she returns to Thornfield.

I heard only the faintest waft of wind roaming fitful among the trees round Thornfield, a mile distant; and when I glanced down in the direction of the murmur, my eye, traversing the hall-front, caught a light kindling in a window: it reminded me that I was late, and I hurried on. (Ch. 12)

When she later meets Rochester (for the traveller was he) he accuses her of being a fairy or a goblin who has bewitched his horse, and the characterisation of Jane as a sprite of some kind runs always through his thoughts and

language. The ideas in her paintings, he says, are elfish. She saves him from being burnt to death in his bed, pouring water on him, and he says,

'In the name of all the elves in Christendom, is that Jane Eyre? What have you done with me, witch, sorceress?' 'Is this my pale little elf?' he says.

We plan to have a terrific lot of fun with fairies and elves and goblins on the CD-Rom. I would wish to have a huge catalogue of images from such as J.A. Fitzgerald and Richard Doyle and Ida Rentil Outhwaite. They are so perfectly expressive of the repressed and crippled eroticism of Jane's text, which, by the way, she admits, on reflection, after a fair bit of e-mail on the subject.

You will have noticed the windows popping up, and also, probably, the moon. The moon is another word with a big menu, as you can imagine.

Moon, satellite of earth, secondary planet, light derived from sun, reflected to earth, dispels darkness of night etc. And the moon is symbolic of cyclic time, controlling the tides, the rains, the seasons—Jane is as I said very keen on the seasons and the weather—and many events in her story take place by the light of the moon. It represents, after all, the feminine principle, and (very important) moon goddesses are weavers of destiny. Jane took off on her life journey, determined to weave her own destiny—the fact that she was actually an heiress and not really such an orphan was just a sort of bonus, I suppose. She sees it that way.

Little things recall us to earth: the clock struck in the hall: that sufficed; I turned from moon and stars, opened a side door, and went in. (Ch. 7)

Jane's eyes glittered in the red-room mirror, and from beginning to end the text is alert with eyes, sights, visions, perspectives. The final optic comment is Rochester's loss of one eye, loss of sight in the other, and then his regaining, under the influence of Jane's love and concern, some sight. Their child inherits his father's eyes—large, brilliant and black. I am longing to put anatomical drawings and photographs of eyes on the CD-Rom. I wonder about a clip of the eye from *Le Chien Andalou*, but Jane is doubtful about that. I have pointed out to her that one of the beauties of interactivity is that a reader can choose not to look at things she doesn't care for. Mrs Reed has 'Cairngorm' eyes, a description I find blissfully horrible.

We had a discussion about the names of the houses in the story. I asked her whether she had used the real names, or whether she had invented them. They are so apt. How, in life, could they be so apt? But she assured me they were the very names of the houses, and pointed out to me the descriptive names of many a country house in Yorkshire as evidence—Stonegappe,

Greycliff. We decided to represent the houses with cartoons, animations, and walkthroughs.

Starting with Gateshead, then.

In the early chapters, because she is intent on travelling far from Gateshead, closing the gates behind her, Jane's principal detailed description is of the red-room, although we know there is a porter's lodge and have the sense that the house is comfortable and reflects a certain prosperity. And later, after living at Lowood and Thornfield, when she visits the dying Mrs Reed, she speaks only of the 'hostile roof' of the exterior, concentrating on descriptions of Mrs Reed's bedroom which is amber, not red.

The image that has always dominated my memory of my first reading of the text when I was fifteen is that of the red-room, and somehow, the passion and the details of the writing there convey to me the sense, the feeling of Gateshead.

The verandas of Lowood, the refectory, the dormitories, the classrooms are dominated by an atmosphere of cold and grey, bare planks and stained plaster, and the school is built in a hollow, a forest-dell which is a cradle for fog and fog-bred pestilence. After Jane's companion Helen Burns has died of fever, Jane goes to the window and looks out. 'There were the two wings of the building; there was the garden, there were the skirts of Lowood; there was the hilly horizon. 'Again she is looking beyond the house which is a kind of prison. It is when she gets to Thornfield where she is to be governess to Edward Rochester's ward Adele that she describes the house as she approaches it.

We now slowly ascended a drive, and came upon the long front of a house: candlelight gleamed from one curtained bow-window; all the rest were dark. (Ch. 11) She crosses a square hall with high doors all round, and then she goes into a room 'whose double illumination of fire and candle at first dazzled me, contrasting as it did with with the darkness to which my eyes had been for two hours inured'.

A snug small room; a round table by a cheerful fire; an armchair high-backed and old-fashioned.

The steps and bannisters were of oak; the staircase window was high and latticed; both it and the long gallery into which the bedroom doors opened looked as if they belonged to a church rather than a house. A very chill and vault-like air pervaded the stairs and gallery, suggesting cheerless ideas of space and solitude.

A bronze lamp pendant from the ceiling, a great clock whose case was of

oak curiously carved, and ebon black with time and rubbing. The hall door which was half of glass, stood open: I stepped over the threshold.

Thornfield was three stories high, of proportions not vast, though considerable; a gentelman's manor-house, not a nobleman's seat: battlements round the top gave it a picturesque look. Its gray front stood out well from the background of a rookery, whose cawing tenants were now on the wing.

We are going to have a lot of fun on the CD-Rom with the rooks—they are like real emblems of Thornfield Hall, the other face of fairies, in a way. And of course the text is marked by dualities like that. There's a lot of black and a lot of white; fire and ice; red and white; kind and cruel; good and evil; life and death; sun and moon; winter and spring and so forth. Clarity and obscurity. Mr Brockelhurst and Edward Rochester are both represented as big black phallic objects against the small white labial-winged fairy of Jane Eyre.

I talked to Jane about the coincidences between some of the people's names and their significance in the textual themes, how apt it is that Edward, the rock, the earth, is called Rochester, and she, the airy fairy one is called Eyre. Then there's the cool spiritual goodness, saintliness really, of St John Rivers.

She agreed that the coincidences were striking. She regretted that, in the scheme of things, Grace Poole should be called Grace Poole, but thought perhaps there was a deep irony there. I said it was then a pity that Bertha Mason's name didn't suggest fire, and Jane agreed. She invented the name Brocklehurst because the real man's name was Tuttleby and she thought it was too silly and distracting for a story. Chapters twenty-five and twenty-six are very important not only to the narrative but to the structure and texture, the unconscious content of the whole thing. Two key dreams are in there, and dream has a menu on the CD-Rom. I suggested to Jane that from the moment she fell into the fit in the red-room, the whole thing could have been a dream, with dreams and nightmares within dreams. She agreed with this, but laughed (e-mail laughing is :-)) and said she wished that half of it *had* been a dream. Like Alice. But although Jane enjoys the story of Alice up to a point, she says she finds much of it sickeningly erotic. I backed off when she said that—I had at the time been about to embark on some remarks about the castration imagery of Edward's crippled hand, and the impotence of his blindess. Better not say. The word dream is quite interesting. There was a Middle English word 'dream' which meant mirth, joy and music, and nobody seems to know what relation this word bears to dream as we know it. Our dream is related to Old Frisian (dram), Old Saxon (drom) and Old High Ger-

man (troum) and signifies a train of thoughts and images passing through the mind during sleep. Jane's story was published in 1847 and Freud didn't publish *The Interpretation of Dreams* until the beginning of the twentieth century, and it's worth noting that the six hundred copies of the first edition of the latter took eight years to sell. This was probably because a frank discussion of dreams was very unfashionable. Jane of course didn't talk *about* dreams, but recounted the events that came to her in dreams without much comment or any analysis.

She has seen Edward's face 'all kindled, and his full falcon-eye flashing, and tenderness and passion in every lineament.' She has left her wedding dress in the wardrobe, addressing it as 'white dream', and she has walked in the orchard under a blood-red moon. Her eyes are glittering strangely and she describes Edward as 'most phantom-like'. She tells him the stories of her two dreams.

It's best if you read the whole thing in Chapter 25; you'll be able to imagine how exciting the dream content of the CD-Rom will be. Imagine the sequences if they were done by Fellini. Dream one: She is following the windings of an unknown road, carrying a child, conscious that Rochester is in the distance somewhere, getting further and further away from her. Dream two: She sees Thornfield Hall as a ruin, the retreat of bats and owls. It's a cold and moonlit night and Jane stumbles along carrying the unknown child, who clings to her neck in teror. She sees Edward disappearing on his horse, stands on a thin wall which crumbles, and the child rolls away from her. Jane woke from that dream to find a terrible apparition in her room, a large woman with thick dark hair, wearing a straight white dress which resembled a shroud. This woman took Jane's wedding veil from the wardrobe, put it on, and looked at herself in the glass. Jane saw the fearful, ghastly face in the mirror. 'It was a discoloured face—it was a savage face. I wish I could forget the roll of the red eyes and the fearful blackened inflation of the lineaments.'

This was of course sensitive material for me to discuss with Jane, but she is very resiliant, and we were able to go over it in detail. She said the woman resembled a vampire, and agreed that it would be interesting and OK to use some clips from various vampire movies to illustrate the point. I said that most of these were pretty crude and unconvincing, but she said she still thought it was worthwhile using them. What she saw in her bedroom was much, much more frightening than anything she has seen on the screen. What you'd need to get, she said, was not virtual reality, but virtual dreaming, even though the woman in her room was not a dream. The woman tore

the veil in two. ‘The veil of the temple,’ I said. ‘Pretty symbolic.’ And Jane agreed.

Edward told her it was Grace Poole, and then after the wedding was aborted by Richard Mason, she discovered that Edward had lied, and that the hideous woman in her room was in fact Bertha Mason, Edward’s mad wife. The way Jane described her she sounded like the embodiment of unconscious, buried rage, and yet she had been real.

Jane then told me about something that still makes her blush with shame and embarrassment. When *Jane Eyre* went into its second edition, it carried a dedication to Thackeray. It wasn’t until after the edition was printed Jane learned that Thackeray’s wife was, like Bertha Mason, insane.

Perhaps the most intriguing and significant point in Jane’s story is reached in Chapter 35 where she asks heaven to show her the right path (ever the pilgrim). This is a supernatural and/or psychological event, having something of the nature of dream, but all the more poswerful because it does not take place during sleep. Is it the will of heaven that Jane should marry St John Rivers? The candle is dying out, the moon is filling the room, and Jane’s heart is throbbing.

But her heart is stopped by a thrill of inexpressible feeling, not unlike an electric shock (advanced talk, I thought, for 1847). ‘Eye and ear waited while flesh quivered on my bones.’ And what she hears is the voice of Rochester calling her name. She calls out in obedience and goes rushing into the night, returns filled with resolve. She will not marry St John, but will set out in search of Rochester.

I told her I had always breathed a sigh of relief at that point because the thought of her going off as a missionary like Deborah Kerr or Audrey Hepburn characters was too ghastly. What about her love of ruby glass and oriental carpets and feather beds and oak and mahogany and looking glasses and flowers and enormous fires—I hesitated when I said that, remembering the destruction of Thornfield Hall. But Jane picked it up at once and said that she could now see in hindsight that the burning of Thornfield was not such a bad thing, that it was a violent cleansing of evil. She is still of a most philosophical and theological turn of mind.

And I believe it is important never to overlook the powerful strain of romanticism that runs deep in Jane’s nature. This manifests in several ways, not least in her willingness to believe in supernatural forces, and her desire to construct the episodes of her life as legends and fairytales, sometimes dark, and sometimes light and beautiful. I am thinking in particular of the events retold in Chapter 28, as they flow on form the last pages of the chap-

ter before. In those last pages Jane has just said what she believes to be her last farewell to Edward, and she is unable to sleep. Her imagination transports her sleepless mind into scenes of childhood; she is back in the red room. She sees a vision of a glorious white woman, moonlike, breaking through the clouds, and the woman speaks to her, calling her ‘daughter’, telling her to flee. And flee she does.

The fine details of this moment when Jane, the eighteen year-old governess, recent bride-to-be of Edward Rochester, slips from the hope of comfort and prosperity to become a woman of the hedgerows, are exquisitely, painfully drawn. She makes up a parcel - some linen, a locket, a ring. In her purse she puts twenty shillings, and, carrying her slippers so as not to make a sound, she steals out. The image of her getting oil and a feather and oiling the key and lock so as not to make a noise has always seemed to me to be particularly poignant. ‘Without one sound’ she passes through the doorway.

The great gate is locked, but little Jane, who seems at this moment to have no substance, opens a wicket and out she goes. This is the ritual of crossing the thresholds like a ghost. She uses the words ‘deadly sad’, and they are perfectly apt. Her past is a mixture of the deadly sad and the heavenly sweet; her future is ‘and awful blank’. And of all the exits and entrances of Jane’s life that the user can examine, this moment of flight is probably the most painful, and possibly the most powerful. It is when Jane, with all her possessions in her parcel, becomes that most helpless and vulnerable of creatures, the homeless woman, the vagabond, the beggar. She leaves behind the pearls that Edward gave her, since they belong to the ‘visionary bride’ who has now melted into air, and she herself, it seems, melts into air.

And because she feels that in her flight she has betrayed her beloved Edward, she hates herself, and the depths to which she briefly falls become a metaphor for that self-hatred. She knows herself to be the instrument of evil to the one she wholly loves. She falls in the mud, crawls forward, spends all her money on a coach ride to take her as far away as possible.

And so she comes to Whitcross, a white crossroad in her life. She has left behind in the coach her parcel of belongings, and so now she is utterly destitute. She really is a pitiful beggar-woman. In a few days she has been stripped of the bridal finery, emblem of safety and success, and has taken on the bedraggled garb of the road where there are probably only two careers open to her, the thief and the whore. We’ll have material here about modern women’s refuges and homeless women at the end of the twentieth century. People are still buried in pauper’s graves in modern cities you know. The female psyche is still to some extent haunted by the fear of the bag-lady, the

knowledge of how easy it is to slip below the surface of society and disappear. Jane's story ends differently because she stumbles, guided, she believes by God, into the haven of the home of St John Rivers.

As she wanders about getting more and more hungry and desperate, she characterises herself as a bird of the air, a biblical creature to whom God affords nourishment and nest. In the birds themselves the reader senses hope for Jane. She is guided by God, guarded by Nature. She nestles into the 'breast of the hill' and goes to sleep, hoping to die, to decay quietly and mingle with the earth. She wakes up and goes on. She hears a church bell, sweet announcement of her salvation. The sounds of birds, clocks and bells will be available on the CD-Rom, as they are underlying themes in the music of the narrative.

She tries to barter her silk scarf and her gloves for a piece of bread, but they are rejected; she begs the swill for the pigs. But eventually she sees 'a pretty little house' with 'a garden before it, exquisitely neat and brilliantly blooming'. The door is white, the knocker is glittering. I can't help thinking of mirage and hallucination brought on by starvation—things are too bright, too sudden, too sharp. But the householder is no help, the mirage fades. Finally Jane goes to the parsonage, only to learn that the parson is away, and she wanders off onto the moorland where she hopes to die, and where crows and ravens can pick her bones. This of course a thoroughly romantic version of what might happen. The light that finally leads her (Lead, Kindly Light) to the safety of St John and his sisters appears now, 'shining dim and constant through the rain'. Rough stones, prickly hedge, and she finds a white gate, a wicket gate, the counterpart of the wicket by which she left when she left Thornfield Hall. She enters and there is the friendly gleam of the light, shining through—bliss—'the lozenged panes of a very small latticed window'.

What she sees through this window is pure cosy fairytale—no palace ever looked finer to a Cinderella than the parlour of this long, low house. The beacon of the candle, the red of the firelight, the walnut dresser with pewter plates, the clean, sanded floor, two ladies in deep mourning, a dog, a cat. And an elderly woman who is knitting a stocking. I suggested to Jane that at this point we might supply the user with a pattern for knitting a stocking, and she thought it was a good idea as many modern readers of the book and users of the CD-Rom would probably never have thought about this very important aspect of life in the time of the story, and the stocking is a detail that emphasises the warmth, simplicity, domesticity, safety and love of the house to which Jane has at last come.

The whole pattern with pictures and diagrams and explanations will be on the CD-Rom, but here is a sample: For one stocking you get 8 ounces of 4-ply and four no.14 needles. Cast on 80 stitches, 26 on one needle and 27 each on two other needles. Knit 2, purl 2 all around for thirty rounds. Now begin the leg. Knit plain for eighty rounds. Then begin to decrease to shape the calf. Knit to within three stitches of the middle, slip one, knit on, draw the slipped stitch over, knit one, purl one, knit one, knit two together, knit the rest of the round plain. Knit eight rounds without decreasing, and then repeat the decrease row. Repeat this procedure eight times, reducing the number of stitches to 63. Knit 63 rounds. After this you come to the heel the foot and the toe, instructions for which will be on the CD-Rom.

To protect herself, to cut herself off from her past, Jane gives a false name to her saviours, and ironically, by not saying she is an Eyre, she conceals from them and herself for the time being the family link that exists between them all.

The homeless bird is, without knowing it, home. She is in the bosom, not of the Nature, she so lately craved, but of her own family. I have spoken to Jane of the incredible coincidence of this fact, of how, of all the places she could stumble into she came here. She speaks of the guiding light, of the hand of God, of the wisdom of the Moon itself, and she says also that because this is the way it happened, she has simply set it down as it was, and left the power of her words to convince the reader of her veracity. In a sense, she says, the facts are so fantastic that nobody would invent them.

We also discussed the way she lay in her bed and heard the Rivers comment on her, and how St John pronounced her plain to look at. I asked her how she felt about that, and she said it has never really troubled her, and that she has even felt her story to be more interesting and accessible to readers who can more easily identify with a plain character than with some great beauty.

I said I thought that she might have even understated her own appearance, and she said that this was possible

There’s a point about her clothes. The black silk frock and the shoes and stockings she wore for the journey had been through a lot, and the sisters had restored them as best they could. This was a very nineteenth century detail, I thought. Nowadays the easiest thing would be to get her some new things. Easier than cleaning the old ones up.

Life, for Jane, from this point on, is not free of trials, but she is on an upward curve. She is restored to her old firm self, and is never again in danger of absolute homelessness. She establishes her selfhood immediately,

with the housekeeper, retaining a sense of mystery and integrity, making goosberry pies, and becoming part of the domestic scene. (She was surprised when I told her I had searched for a recipe for gooseberry pie in my many cookery , books and had even emailed friends asking for help, and had been unable to find one. Goosberry amber, cheese, chutney, cluster cup, cream, flan, fool, huff cap, jam, jelly , meringue, mould, pudding—but between moulds and puddings, no pie. Jane suggested I try the Net, and sure enough there was a recipe on the Pie Page (http://www.teleport.com/~psyched/pie/goose.html) At the home of the Rivers, the homeless, loveless orphan of the early years has taken her final great step towards the house, hearth, home she has always craved. I asked her whether anybody had ever made a board game of her life; she said she didn't know, but we agreed that it was a perfect blueprint for such a thing. I recently received a glossy invitation to an exhibition of Jane's latest paintings. The pictures are vivid interiors, rooms filled with rich furnishings and all with windows looking out onto gardens, parks, and hillsides. The gallery, is, by nice coincidence, close to the Freud Museum in London. She has painted several pictures of Thornfield as she remembers it in the good times; and also some of the ruin. One of the great pleasures of making the CD-Rom will be the opportunity for publishing a number of Janes's paintings to illustrate the text. She still has, by some miracle, the first pictures she showed to Edward so long ago. The drawings she imagined while trying to get to sleep at Lowood—freely pencilled houses and trees, butterflies hovering over over-blown roses, birds picking at ripe cherries—these can all now be found in her folio. There is also a series of beautiful and haunting sketches of Helen Burns, mostly from memory, although a few are works Jane did before Helen died.

I am keen to include a photograph of the plate on which Bessie brought Jane food after the ordeal in the red-room. Brightly-painted china with a bird of paradise nestling in a wreath of convolvulus and rosebuds. This plate, also, has survived unscathed. It's one of the many objects in Jane's story that testifies to her love of colourful, exotic trappings. She admits that she still feels a secret attraction for crimson velvets and glittering crystal, for exotic gifts from the Continent, and for the even wilder ornaments of the East and the Indies, but says she is now dedicated to moderation and simplicity. She had Adele educated in England, she said, in order to correct her French defects.

Gulliver's Travels and *The Arabian Nights and Pilgrim's Progress* are still among her favourite books, showing her lifelong belief in the magic of storytelling and the dangers and pleasures of the traveller in strange and unknown lands. And demonstrating also the way she has always positioned

herself powerfully at the centre of the story. She sits curled in the window-seat behind the red curtains, observing the icy, moonlit world outside, and spinning from her own imagination the story of the pilgrimage of her life. We'll definitely start the CD-Rom with the cliche of the closed red curtains, so inviting, like a theatre, so full of promise yet subtly infused with threat. What rooks, ravens, black phallic villains and scarlet goblins will come forth? When the curtain comes down at the end, what countries of the mind we shall have visited.

Jane sees the making of the CD-Rom as yet another pilgrimage, another following of the windings of an unknown road. I have recently sent her a copy of *The Wizard of Oz* which she had not read, but which she thought sounded very interesting. Meanwhile, I am working on the development of Jane's story in a form that she says she never imagined would be possible.

I have not indicated in the text most of the places where it will be possible for the user of the CD-Rom to explore. Consequently I will list here some of the key words that will be highlighted for use, giving access to all manner of different forms of text, illustration, sound and walkthrough: red, black, white, window, gate, door, mahogany, moon, sun, fire, snow, house, homeless, pilgrim, Freud, Simone de Beauvoir, Thackeray, bride, raven, bird, rose, dream, stocking, gooseberry, clock, bell, eye, fairy