

DO SOMETHING WITH YOURSELF!
The Life of Charlotte Brontë

By Linda Manning

**Published in *Women Playwrights, the Best Plays of 1996*, July,
1998 by Smith & Kraus Publishers, Lyme, New Hampshire**

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DO SOMETHING WITH YOURSELF!
The Life of Charlotte Brontë

won

Third Prize in the
1994
Center Theatre International Playwriting Contest
Chicago, IL

Third Prize in the
1994
Great Platte River Playwrights' Festival
University of Nebraska
Kearney, NE

was a finalist in the
1994
Robert J. Pickering Award for Playwriting Excellence
Coldwater, MI

was a finalist in the
1994
South Carolina Playwrights' Festival
Trustus Theatre
Columbia, SC

This play contains excerpts from
the novels, journal entries,
and letters of
Charlotte Brontë and others.
They are footnoted where
they appear in the script.

DO SOMETHING WITH YOURSELF! The Life of Charlotte Brontë was first produced in a workshop production by The Invisible Theatre in August, 1993 at Studio Theatre in New York City. In the fall of 1994 after further development the production toured the New England area. In April, 1996 The Invisible Theatre produced an Equity Showcase production of the play at the Miranda Theatre in New York City, and in 1997 that production toured Colorado:

Charlotte Brontë.....Linda Manning
All the men.....Michael Pinney

Directed by Douglas Wagner
Original Music by Douglas Wagner

CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS

Charlotte Brontë - During the course of the play she ages from 22 to 38. She has a Northern English dialect. She is a brilliant, passionate, fiercely honest woman living in the restricted world of Victorian England. Her ambition and desire are in constant conflict with her powerful sense of responsibility and duty. (It is important when playing this character that she never see herself as a victim.)

The following characters are all played by one male actor:

(in order of appearance)

- Patrick Brontë - Charlotte's father. In his 60's and 70's during the course of the play. His dialect is Irish, tempered with a proper English education. He is a very private, sharp, opinionated man, but at the same time needy of Charlotte.
- Henry Nussey - Brother of Charlotte's good friend, Ellen. He is young, British and quite confident.
- Monsieur Heger - Charlotte's instructor in Brussels. He is 35, French, provoking, and intellectual.
- Robert Southey - Poet Laureate of Britain, aristocratic, and very self-important.
- Arthur Nicholls - The town curate and Charlotte's husband. He is in his 30's and is Irish. He is a kind, gentle, straight-forward man. He is intelligent and perceptive and cares deeply for Charlotte.
- Edward Rochester - The hero of Charlotte's novel Jane Eyre. He has a proper English dialect and is in his early 40's. He is a brooding, powerful, sensual man -- the embodiment of the Victorian romantic hero.
- Reviewers - Five different people, all British.
- Branwell Brontë - Charlotte's younger brother. He is in his late twenties and has the same dialect as Charlotte. He is smart, sarcastic, embittered, and angry. He is a drunk and an opium addict.

George Smith - Charlotte's publisher. He is 25 years old and has a very proper upper-class, educated English dialect. He is an ambitious, sincere, outgoing businessman.

James Taylor - A member of Charlotte's publishing firm. He is middle-aged and Scottish.

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ACT I

*(This play is to be performed by a man and a woman, the man will play all the male characters. In the transitions the male actor transforms instantaneously from one character to another, therefore the differentiation of his characters should be done physically and vocally rather than with costumes (minor costume pieces can be used to differentiate characters if the use of them does not interrupt the action). The style of **DO SOMETHING WITH YOURSELF!** is episodic and expressionistic. Although the true story of Charlotte Brontë's life is at the center of this work the play is not a historical documentary.*

The actress playing Charlotte wears traditional Victorian underwear, camisole and bloomers, and a long burgundy skirt. She should be barefoot with her hair hanging loosely down. The male actor wears heavy work pants, boots and a long knotted cravat around his neck. He is bare-chested. As stated above he may quickly put on a shirt or jacket to differentiate character.

The set consists of a large desk that will stand on its end and become a huge book, a plain wooden chair, a wooden push cart on wheels that also functions as a writing desk, a rolling office chair (used by Mr. Brontë somewhat like a wheelchair), a very tall stack of miniature size journals suspended from the ceiling on a rope, a large clear glass wash basin on the floor with a little water and a rag in it, and a small brightly colored platform that has a standing microphone on it (to be used by George Smith and all the suitors who propose to Charlotte). Upstage hangs a long black riding cloak. There are prop tables for small hand props stage right and left so they are easily accessible to the actors, and noticeable to the audience. The actress playing Charlotte wears a body microphone so her most internal speeches/letters will have the amplified sound of intimate speech on a microphone. Both actors remain on stage during the entire play.

The action begins in the year 1838 when Charlotte is 22 years old.)

CHARLOTTE

(She speaks to the audience.)

All this day I have been in a dream half-miserable and half-ecstatic miserable because it showed in the vivid light of reality the ongoings of the infernal world. I have been toiling for nearly an hour with Miss Lister, Miss Marriott and Ellen Cook striving to teach them the distinction between an article and a substantive. The parsing lesson was completed, a dead silence had succeeded it in the schoolroom and I sat sinking from irritation and weariness into a kind of lethargy. The thought came over me am I to spend all the best part of my life in this wretched bondage, forcibly suppressing my rage at the idleness the apathy and the hyperbolical and most asinine stupidity of those fat-headed oafs and on compulsion assuming an air of kindness, patience and assiduity? Must I from day to day sit chained to this chair prisoned within these four bare walls, while these glorious summer suns are burning in heaven and the year is revolving in its richest glow and declaring at the close of every summer's day the time I am losing will never come again? Stung to the heart with these reflections I started up and mechanically walked to the window. I shut the window and went back to my seat. Then came on me rushing impetuously, all the mighty phantasms that Branwell and I had conjured from nothing to a system strong as some religious creed.

I felt as if I could have written gloriously -- I longed to write. If I had time to indulge it I felt that the vague sensations of that moment would have settled down into some narrative better at least than anything I ever produced before. But just then a Dolt came up with a lesson. I thought I should have vomited.¹

(Mr. Brontë enters rolling on in his office chair. He is carrying a large pistol. He periodically aims and fires the pistol into the air. The pistol makes no sound, but he says "Bang" every time he fires and seems to be shooting at something.)

MR. BRONTË

Charlotte! What are you doing home?

CHARLOTTE

I'm home for the holiday Father, I missed you.

¹ Journal entry by Charlotte Brontë, August 11, 1836.

MR. BRONTË

Did Miss Wooler allow you to go?

CHARLOTTE

Where are Emily and Anne?

MR. BRONTË

They are out with the dogs. Did Miss Wooler allow you to go or did you quit like Emily?

CHARLOTTE

Miss Wooler felt it was important that I come home.

MR. BRONTË

Why?

CHARLOTTE

I haven't felt well. I've been quite sick actually. I didn't want to worry you, so I didn't mention it in my letters. I caught a cold and it went into my chest, I was coughing and coughing this horrendous cough, my chest got very tight, you know how it does . . .

MR. BRONTË

You're not going back are you?

CHARLOTTE

Papa . . .

MR. BRONTË

Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE

I hate teaching. I'm suffocating there.

MR. BRONTË

Charlotte, your brother is home.

CHARLOTTE

What?

MR. BRONTË

He came home a week after he left for London.

CHARLOTTE

What happened?

MR. BRONTË

Branwell showed his paintings, his drawings to the Director at the Royal Academy, and they didn't let him in.

CHARLOTTE

Oh, Father.

MR. BRONTË

But he stayed in London for a week and spent all the money we gave him.

CHARLOTTE

On what?!

MR. BRONTË

He said the only reason he came home was because he ran out of money.

CHARLOTTE

How could he spend all of that in a week?

MR. BRONTË

Whiskey is expensive.

CHARLOTTE

He couldn't drink that much whiskey in a week.

MR. BRONTË

In London taverns my dear there are other things to spend money on besides drink.

Charlotte. . . what are you going to do with yourself?

CHARLOTTE

What do you mean?

MR. BRONTË

With your life?

CHARLOTTE

Live here with you, take care of you, make myself useful, of course.

MR. BRONTË

Prepare yourself Charlotte, prepare yourself for the worst. (*He aims the pistol.*) Bang! It's going to come, you can be ready or you can be slapped down by it.

CHARLOTTE

Well being a governess is the worst, I've arrived. I want . . .

MR. BRONTË

Bang! We all have a duty in this life, a sacred duty, to achieve our potential. Anything less than our absolute best is not acceptable.

CHARLOTTE

I know . . . that's why I want . . . I want to do the right thing with my life. I don't want to waste it.

MR. BRONTË

Only God knows what the right thing is my dear. You must teach. That's how you'll earn a living. Go back to Miss Wooler's and learn to be a great teacher! Bang!

(The male actor discards Mr. Brontë's pistol, and becomes Henry Nussey. He holds a sign which says "Proposal Number One. Henry Nussey, brother of Charlotte's close friend, Ellen Nussey". He plays the following proposal on the small platform that has a standing microphone and proclaims himself to the audience very presentationally.)

MR. NUSSEY

Dear Miss Brontë, It was a pleasure to have you as a guest in our home. I'm sorry your experience at Miss Wooler's school was not more satisfying, but I know my beloved sister Ellen enjoyed the opportunity to nurse you back to good spirits. I trust your return trip to Haworth went safely.

I am writing to you as I have recently become curate of Donnington in Sussex. Within a month I will be comfortably settled there, my health is much improved from the last time you saw me, and it is my intention to take pupils on very soon. I shall need a wife to help in the education of these pupils, and I cordially ask you to fill that position. Quite sincerely, Henry Nussey.

CHARLOTTE

(Charlotte faces the audience.)

Dear Mr. Nussey, Thank you very much for your kind words as to my visit to Brookroyd.

In terms of the other matter, I cannot marry you as I have not, and could not have, that intense attachment which would make me willing to die for you, and, if I ever marry, it must be in that light of adoration that I will regard my husband. Cordially, Charlotte Brontë.²

(The male actor dejectedly drops Nussey's sign and steps down from the platform. The lights change and Charlotte is suddenly thrown into a strange new room. The male actor becomes Heger. He is French. He interrogates her by holding a spotlight on her face and moving it across various parts of her body.)

HEGER

Miss Brontë? Monsieur Constantin Heger. You call me Monsieur.

Your place . . . before . . . was with a Miss Wooler?

CHARLOTTE

Yes.

HEGER

At an institution . . . Roe Head?

CHARLOTTE

Yes.

HEGER

Why did you quit it?

CHARLOTTE

My sisters and I are . . .

HEGER

You come here to Brussels to strengthen your education, so that you and your sisters can open your own school in Haworth, in England. You are from Haworth?

² Passages in both letters taken from actual letters written by Henry Nussey and Charlotte Brontë in the Spring of 1839.

CHARLOTTE

Yes.

HEGER

It is only for this that you continue to study, Miss Brontë?

CHARLOTTE

Well, yes.

HEGER

So you want to be a . . . governess?

CHARLOTTE

I'm afraid I don't understand.

HEGER

Of course you do not understand. You do as all the English girls with no wealth and no beauty do, you become a governess, like sheep you become governess. You are not thinking for yourself. If you seek an authentic education, you must learn to think.

CHARLOTTE

Yes, sir. Monsieur.

HEGER

For the moment, since you are older than most students here, and you know English well, I will make you teach the, uh, the nuances to the younger girls. Reassure yourself. You will still have plenty of time for your own studies, and you will be paid for your work.

There it is.

(Charlotte begins to leave.)

Again, one thing, you will join my wife and me and our children this evening for dinner. You may go.

(Charlotte crosses to the pushcart that has a large open book attached to it which enables it to double as a writing desk. During the next monologue she wheels the cart/writing desk across the stage as she writes in the book. The pushcart/writing desk throughout the play is a literal symbol of the effort Charlotte expends writing.)

CHARLOTTE

Something of daylight still lingered, and the moon was waxing bright: I could see him plainly. His figure was enveloped in a riding cloak, fur collared, and steel clasped; its details were not apparent, but I traced the general points of middle height, and considerable breadth of chest. He had a dark face, with stern features and a heavy brow; his eyes and gathered eyebrows looked ireful and thwarted just now; he was past youth, but had not reached middle age; perhaps he might be thirty-five. I felt no fear of him, and but little shyness. Had he been a handsome, heroic-looking young gentleman, I should not have dared to stand thus questioning him against his will, and offering my services unasked. I had hardly ever seen a handsome youth; never in my life spoken to one. I had a theoretical reverence and homage for beauty, elegance, gallantry, fascination; but had I met those qualities incarnate in masculine shape, I should have known instinctively that they neither had nor could have sympathy with anything in me, and should have shunned them as one would fire, lightning, or anything else that is bright but antipathetic.³

*(She is interrupted by Heger who carries his light.
She puts down the pushcart.)*

HEGER

Have you made a walk, Miss Brontë?

CHARLOTTE

No, Monsieur.

HEGER

The garden is resplendent. Will you accompany me?

*(They stroll across the stage as in a garden, in
unison, using very specific choreographed steps.)*

CHARLOTTE

Do you want to speak to me about something?

HEGER

I want, very much, that you give me particular English lessons.

³ Spoken by the character of Jane Eyre in Charlotte Brontë's novel of the same name, published 1847.

CHARLOTTE

Sir?

HEGER

I know the language, but not as well as you.

CHARLOTTE

As you wish.

HEGER

We will start tomorrow, in the afternoon, after classes.

CHARLOTTE

Is that all then?

HEGER

Yes. No. There is something else. Your work, not school work, but the work of the tales that you started with your brother . . . ah . . .

CHARLOTTE

Branwell.

HEGER

Yes, that is it, Branwell. The tales that you have begun together years ago . . . the tale that you gave to me is the most recent?

CHARLOTTE

Yes.

HEGER

You have written it without your brother?

CHARLOTTE

Yes. Branwell and I started these stories together, but we actually haven't written together for about ten years. I continued on in my vein, and I'm not really sure if he's kept up with his.

HEGER

I do not know how too much to say this Charlotte . . . I want to be very honest. I debate whether to say anything. But in the measure that my opinion would be useful for you . . .

CHARLOTTE

It is worth a great deal to me Monsieur.

HEGER

In this measure . . . You are extraordinary girl. I regard this simple, plain face and I . . . I am full.

CHARLOTTE

Monsieur?

HEGER

Since so many, many Springs I sit in this garden, amazed by the power of God that is in every tree and every . . . luscious flower, but on this day of Spring in this garden where I am sitting since so many, many times, I am again amazed by the power of God. I do not see the flowers, I see you. God has given me a gift. He has brought you to me. You do not know yet what you have done, or what you will do.

He is mysterious, I do not understand. He has chosen this young girl and rendered her so powerful, like a man.

While you are my student, I want you to write. I want you to write day and night, every moment you are free, I want you to write.

CHARLOTTE

Yes. Monsieur.

HEGER

Do not speak. Put yourself to your work. I want to read everything.

(Charlotte crosses to her partially completed canvas on the back wall and paints. Heger enters, his English is much better. He is holding a manuscript and his light.)

HEGER

Am I interrupting?

CHARLOTTE

No. Monsieur Heger.

HEGER

How is your writing going?

CHARLOTTE
Poorly.

HEGER
What are you working on?

CHARLOTTE
A portrait.

HEGER
May I look?

CHARLOTTE
No!

HEGER
I know you have not enjoyed teaching Charlotte, but it is this that has made it possible for you to afford staying here . . .

CHARLOTTE
I don't mind teaching.

HEGER
. . . for two years . . . for two years I have tried to help you. I have watched over you. I have known you for two years Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE
I don't mind teaching. I particularly enjoyed our English lessons.

HEGER
Why did you give my wife your letter of resignation?

CHARLOTTE
She showed it to you?

HEGER
Of course.

CHARLOTTE
Already?

HEGER
Answer me!

CHARLOTTE

When I first came here I felt welcome.

HEGER

What are you saying?

CHARLOTTE

My family . . . I should be getting back.

HEGER

That is why you are leaving?

CHARLOTTE

The time period we agreed to is over.

HEGER

That is why you are leaving?

(silence)

I have finished reading your manuscript. *(He drops it.)* You are not expressing yourself. The language is artful, but much too controlled.

CHARLOTTE

I don't know what has happened to me, I feel distracted and when I write, what I want to say is not there.

HEGER

And you think you can no longer benefit from my instruction?

CHARLOTTE

No.

HEGER

You think you have achieved your potential as a writer?

CHARLOTTE

You have given me a great deal Monsieur.

HEGER

Then tell me the truth.

CHARLOTTE

You've left me alone for six months. This is the first time you have come to my room and spoken to me face to face. You address me during lessons only when you have to. You read my compositions, write your notes, and leave them silently on my desk when I am not there. During the summer holiday you left me alone in this house, for two months, without a soul to talk to. I walked the streets just to be with people. I missed you.

HEGER

So you will return to Haworth. Live in the country. Perhaps teach.

CHARLOTTE

I came here to get the skills to teach.

HEGER

And is that still what you want?

CHARLOTTE

I want many things.

HEGER

You are a writer, Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE

I didn't know that until I met you. I don't know what I'm supposed to do now.

HEGER

May I have this? (*referring to her canvas*)

CHARLOTTE

It's not finished . . .

HEGER

You will stay through the holiday then?

CHARLOTTE

If you insist.

HEGER

It is up to you. You are a free woman.

CHARLOTTE

I am completely trapped.

HEGER

So am I.

CHARLOTTE

May I write to you?

HEGER

I cannot promise you anything Charlotte.

(He stands off stage right slowly tearing up large pieces of paper during the next speech. Charlotte writes at her cart/writing desk.)

CHARLOTTE

Dear Monsieur. Mr. Taylor has returned from Brussels. I asked him if he had a letter for me.

HEGER

No; nothing.

CHARLOTTE

Patience, said I - his sister will be here soon. Miss Taylor has returned.

HEGER

I have nothing for you, neither letter nor message.

CHARLOTTE

It has been one year Monsieur since I left. Day and night I find neither rest nor peace. If I sleep I am disturbed by tormenting dreams in which I see you, always severe, always grave, always incensed against me. Forgive me then, Monsieur, if I adopt the course of writing to you again. How can I endure life if I make no effort to ease its sufferings?

I know you will be irritated when you read this letter. All I know is that I cannot, that I will not, resign myself to lose wholly the friendship of my master. I would rather suffer the greatest physical pain than always have my heart lacerated by smarting regrets. If my master withdraws his friendship from me entirely I shall be altogether without hope; if he gives me a little - just a little - I shall be satisfied - happy; I shall have a reason for living on, for working.

CHARLOTTE (cont'd)

You showed me of yore a little interest, when I was your pupil in Brussels, and I hold on to the maintenance of that little interest - I hold on to it as I would hold on to life.

You will tell me perhaps - "I take not the slightest interest in you, Mademoiselle Charlotte. You are no longer an inmate of my house; I have forgotten you." Well, Monsieur, tell me so frankly. It will be a shock to me. It matters not. It would be less dreadful than uncertainty.

I shall not re-read this letter. I send it as I have written it.

One suffers in silence so long as one has the strength so to do, and when that strength gives out one speaks without too carefully measuring one's words.

I wish Monsieur happiness and prosperity! C.B.⁴

(The male actor becomes Southey, languidly applauding Charlotte's letter.)

SOUTHEY

My dear Miss Brontë?

CHARLOTTE

Mr. Southey!

SOUTHEY

In response to your letter and poems that you sent me, you evidently possess, and in no inconsiderable degree, what Wordsworth calls "the faculty of verse". You should not, however, be encouraged to high hopes as there are nowadays so many poets writing. Whoever, therefore, is ambitious of distinction in this way ought to be prepared for disappointment. Literature cannot be the business of a woman's life, and it ought not to be. The more she is engaged in her proper duties, the less leisure will she have for it, even as an accomplishment and a recreation. To those duties you have not yet been called, and when you are you will be less eager for celebrity. The daydreams in which you habitually indulge are likely to induce a distempered state of mind; and in proportion as all the ordinary uses of the

⁴ Letter written from Charlotte Brontë to Monsieur Heger, dated January 8, 1845.

SOUTHEY (cont'd)

world seem to you flat and unprofitable, you will be unfitted for them without becoming fitted for anything else. Write poetry for your own private use, and not with a view to celebrity . . . so written, it is wholesome both of the heart and soul; it may be made the surest means, next to religion, of soothing the mind, and elevating it. You may embody in it your best thoughts and your wisest feelings, and in so doing discipline and strengthen them.⁵

(Long pause as Southey/the male actor recedes to the background. Charlotte speaks to the audience.)

CHARLOTTE

I shall be thirty-one next birthday. What have I done these last thirty years? Precious little.⁶

I've been thinking a great deal lately about leaving Haworth, and finding another situation in Paris. Perhaps now is the time. After all, I am a trained governess, that is something.

I mentioned it to both my sisters Anne and Emily and they are silent. I have no employment here, we were not able to find enough pupils to make our own school a reality. No one wants to send their children to this desolate place. My French is good enough, I could obtain a situation in Paris.

(Nicholls enters carrying an old, tattered traveling bag overflowing with everything he owns, i.e. clothes, pots and pans, his Bible, some tools, etc.)

A stalwart form, a massive head,
A firm determined face,
Black Spanish locks, a sunburnt cheek,
A brow high, broad and white . . .⁷

NICHOLLS

Excuse me?

⁵ Letter written to Charlotte Brontë from Robert Southey, dated March, 1837.

⁶ Excerpt from letter written by Charlotte Brontë, March, 1847.

⁷ From a poem written by Charlotte Brontë.

(The contents of his bag clank when he sets it down.)

CHARLOTTE

Who are you?

NICHOLLS

I'm sorry, I didn't mean to startle you. I'm Arthur Bell Nicholls, the new curate.

CHARLOTTE

Yes?

NICHOLLS

I was looking for your father.

CHARLOTTE

Do you often enter other people's homes unwelcomed and unannounced?

NICHOLLS

I beg your pardon. Your father instructed me to come and meet with him at this hour, he suggested I enter freely. I did knock.

CHARLOTTE

I didn't hear you.

He is in his room across the hall.

NICHOLLS

Your name is Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE

Yes.

NICHOLLS

Are you a writer? I heard you reciting some verse when I came in.

(He looks at what is written on Charlotte's push cart/writing desk.)

CHARLOTTE

I suppose you find that amusing in a woman.

NICHOLLS

No. Not at all.

(Pause)

NICHOLLS (cont'd)

Shall I collect your father?

CHARLOTTE

If that is what he asked you to do.

NICHOLLS

Good day.

CHARLOTTE

Good bye.

(The male actor recedes into the background. Charlotte seats herself behind the large desk which is covered with a plain tablecloth that goes to the floor.)

CHARLOTTE

(She speaks to the audience.)

My sister has written a novel.

(She throws off the table cloth to expose the table which is a huge book. On the cover of the book which is also the top of the desk "Wuthering Heights by Ellis Bell" is printed.)

She calls it "Wuthering Heights".

(Charlotte throws open the cover of the book so that the hinged cover and pages fly open downstage toward the audience.)

My sister Emily (Ellis Bell, it is wise to be thought of as a man, I suppose), Emily doesn't seem to need people. In fact she prefers solitude. She expresses herself in her writing and is not troubled with the consequences. She has an original mind. She has allowed her natural impulses to guide her . . . and this book is frightening, shocking really, but wonderful. No woman that has ever lived has written such a book as this, and none ever will.

(Charlotte closes the cover of the book.)

I am a writer also.

(Charlotte crosses to the suspended miniature journals. The male actor cuts off the knot in the bottom of the rope and the books scatter on the floor.)

These are my journals and books.

(Charlotte gathers a few up in her arms or skirt and shows them to the audience.)

I have been writing adamantly, diligently and tirelessly for over fifteen years now in the hopes of producing a great novel, the work of art that will change the literary world forever. People will read my book and gasp and sigh and wonder what kind of a person wrote it because it will contain the barest, simplest Truth. I will capture that in a novel, and it will be undeniable, and for the first time the world will know who I truly am.

(Black out. Next is a series of four separate tableaux of Charlotte and the big book. The lights come up on the following and black out between each one: 1) Charlotte lifting one end of the desk/book; 2) desk/book sitting on its end with Charlotte balancing on top of it; 3) desk/book cover is now facing directly down stage and Charlotte lies on the ground in front of it; 4) Charlotte rips off the Wuthering Heights cover to expose the real book cover which says "Jane Eyre by Currer Bell". She opens the book in triumph. Mr. Brontë rolls in on his office chair, aiming his pistol. Charlotte jumps up and down in front of her creation.)

MR. BRONTË

Bang! Bang! Bang! Charlotte!

CHARLOTTE

Papa I've been writing a book.

MR. BRONTË

Charlotte, bring me my tea.

CHARLOTTE

Papa I've been writing a book.

MR. BRONTË

Have you my dear? Bang!

CHARLOTTE

But Papa I want you to look at it.

MR. BRONTË

I can't be troubled to read manuscripts.

CHARLOTTE

But it is printed. The title is Jane Eyre.

MR. BRONTË

I hope you have not been involving yourself in any silly expense.

CHARLOTTE

I think I shall gain some money by it.

MR. BRONTË

I'll be in my room.⁸

(He rolls away. Charlotte opens the front cover and steps inside the book to talk to the audience.)

CHARLOTTE

Mr. Edward Rochester has fallen hopelessly in love with Miss Jane Eyre.

(She then sets down the desk/book so it can function again as a desk.)

Rochester has gotten himself into something that is bigger than he thought.

ROCHESTER

Jane!

(All the lights black out. There is a thunder clap and a quick burst of light (lightening) which illuminates Rochester's entrance. The male actor is wearing the riding cloak that was hanging upstage. The moment is meant to be extremely

⁸ Conversation between Charlotte and Mr. Brontë from a letter written by Mrs. Gaskell to Catherine Winkworth, August 25, 1850, as told to Mrs. Gaskell by Charlotte Brontë.