Review

Jane Eyre searching for belonging

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This paper tackles Jane Eyre's journey to get belonging. This journey passes five phases. The paper is not going to focus on these chronological phases in details or highlight on them. The major task of the researcher is to discuss two major points: Jane's consistent endeavors to have belonging and the moral stance of Jane to achieve this purpose. These two points will give the researcher a convenient chance to manipulate such characters as Rochester and Bertha. The researcher will try to expose Charlotte Bronte's conventionality, which is so obvious in tacking many crucial situations, particularly among Jane, Bertha and Rochester. The researcher's interest is to show which goal Jane dreams to achieve: love or autonomy? That is why he is not going to defend Bronte as a feminist. Yes, she tried to expose the social diseases in her nineteenth-century British society. But the problem is with Bronte herself, for she has no rebellious character. It is left for the reader to decide which character is Charlotte Bronte: a feminist or a traditional writer?

Key words: Bertha, Creole, belonging, autonomy, love, Rochester, insanity, governess, money, poverty, feminist, outsider.

INTRODUCTION

Charlotte Bronte is well-known as a serious advocate for the Victorian woman, an advocate and not a feminist. There is a great difference between being an advocate for woman affairs and a feminist. The proof is that the advocate can be either a man or a woman. Jane Eyre is a reasonable example to support this point of view. Jane is a fictionalized version of Brontë herself. But although Brontë's world is undoubtedly based on nineteenth-century society, it should be remembered that the world conjured in Jane Eyre is not reality; it is a world constructed by Brontë to tell a story. Perhaps Jane Eyre retains such power and relevance because Charlotte fabricated the book from the cloth of her own psyche, her own passionate nature; and so, although the British culture has changed drastically since the book was written, the insights into human nature which Brontë gave readers remain. Jane herself is Charlotte's most highly resolved character. Charlotte seems to know Jane intimately, so intimately that it seems likely that Jane is "Charlotte's avatar within her fictional world" (Mirriam Allott, 1973).

This work is not going to focus only on Jane Eyre's
searching for belonging, and how many people helped her in achieving her purpose. The purpose is, also, to focus on Mrs. Rochester, Bertha, and her bitter sufferings for losing belonging in a foreign society. The paper will not only focus on Bronte's major female character (Jane) and her five journeys to get independence, identity and belonging, but to delineate also how Mrs. Rochester suffered a lot in her journey in Thornfield. Thornfield represents a place full of thorns for Mrs. Rochester which led her to become mad. To embody how Bertha is a true victim of the English society represented through her husband, this work must give first a full critical analysis about Jane as an English girl, and her chronological journeys she had undergone until she achieved her goal. The paper will delineate Mrs. Rochester's character, particularly in comparison to Jane Eyre as two females living at the same time and place (The Victorian England).

Jane Eyre’s protest to get belonging

First, Jane is an orphan, but she does not wait for the kindness of her male relatives, nor does she play the role of a pious orphan. Doubtless, this attitude represents a problem for Bronte. To some extent, she fails to shape an ideal orphan not only to the Victorian society, but also to any objective reader considering the different destinies of both Jane and Bertha: “Yes” responded Abbot, “if [Jane] were a nice, pretty child, one might compassionate her forlornness: but one really cannot care for such a little toad as that” (Bronte, 28). At the first glance, Jane appears to be a romantic novel in which the penniless, orphaned heroine gets a home, and wealth at the end. But many of the critics regarded the novel to be "a dangerous book due to the outrages on decorum, as well as the moral perversity of a woman who defied Victorian social conventions" (Mozley, 1953). Bronte can present her moral purpose in Jane Eyre in a calm manner to be more convincing.

Jane Eyre is proud; therefore she is ungrateful, too. It pleased God to make her an orphan, friendless, and penniless- yet she thanks nobody, least all of Him, for the food and raiment, the friends, companions, and instructors or her helpless youth- for the care and education...On the contrary, she looks upon all that has been done for her not only as her undoubted right, but as telling far short of it (Rigby, 1948).

When Jane’s mother, born of a well to do middle class family, married Jane’s father, her family considered the marriage lower than her social status in the Victorian society. Their union was” in the space between classes...socially ambiguous, and this ambiguity is part of the legacy to Jane” (Fraiman, 1996). She was born poor and when her parents died without leaving her any money, she became dependent on others to care for her. Despite this better fact, Jane still demands to be treated as an equal to her relations and she becomes irate if treated unfairly. Indeed, “What horrified the Victorians was Jane's anger” (Gilbert and Gubar, 2000). According to Parama Roy, Jane’s words prove to the Victorian reader that Jane is “witty, proud, unsubmissive and quick to demand her rights and resent her injuries- qualities manifestly foreign to a child in her position” (Roy, 1989). Even the servants are flustered by Jane's behavior, and are often telling Jane:

"You ought not to think of your self on an equality with the Misses Reed and Mr. Reed, because Miss is kind to allow you to be brought with them. They will have a great deal of money, and you will have none: it is your place to be humble and to try to make yourself agreeable to them (Bronte, 15)

It seems that Charlotte Bronte mixes her own rebellious thoughts and feelings towards the Victorian society's severe treatment of women, with an orphan's innocent feelings. It is so early from the part of Jane to behave in such a rebellious way towards the Reed family. Severe social circumstances do not always kill innocence particularly in early childhood. We can take Cinderella as an example. As Clarke notes "Jane Eyre is the classic Cinderella: poor, despised, and mistreated" (Clarke, 2013: 123). Both Cinderella and Jane are victims of the envy and cruelty of their society, Cinderella's stepmother and Jane's Aunt Reed. Most readers of Cinderella, whose circumstances were too much bitter than Jane's, sympathize with her simply because of her innocence. Of Course, Cinderella gets a good compensation through marrying the smart prince with whom she experienced true love. But the Bronte heroine never stops complaining, attacking others and causing much trouble for herself and the people surrounding her. It is, perhaps, Bronte's purpose to defend the Victorian Women's social and moral conditions whose society considered them" as intellectually inferior to men" (Purchase, 2006:74). This harsh social background might be the reason behind Bronte's rebellious nature that consequently pushed her young heroine to lose a lot of her innocence:

If people were always kind and obedient to those who are cruel and unjust, the wicked people would have it all their own way: they would never feel afraid, and so they would never alter, but would grow worse and worse. When we are struck at without a reason, we should strike back again very hard; I am sure we should — so hard as to teach the person who struck us never to do it again. [...] I must dislike those who, whatever I do to please them, persist in displeasing me; I must resist those who punish me unjustly. It is as natural as that I should love those who show me affection, or submit to punishment when I feel it is deserved. (Bronte, 52)

Jane is supposed to be grateful to her Aunt for feeding her and giving a roof over her head. However, she never
seems grateful enough for her Aunt to allow her to keep living with the family. It cannot be said that Jane's path for autonomy is ultimately wrong, because this reasonable path helps her to achieve belonging, but not love. On the other hand, Jane can reach her reasonable purposes in a calm way.

In Volume III, Jane is no longer a poor and destitute orphan. She finally finds financial independence, relatives (Not Home) and self-confidence enough to face Rochester on equal ground. She declares her independence to him: "No Sir, I am an independent woman now". "Independent! What do you mean, Jane?" 'My uncle in Madeira is dead, and he left me five thousand pounds'" (Bronte, 434). Jane's financial and social new situations do not make a big difference for Rochester. He needs her to compensate him for his insane wife, particularly because Jane is characterized by a reasonable nature, something Rochester loses in his relationship with both his wife and the various mistresses he knew before Jane.

For Cinderella, the help to overcome her severe circumstances came in the form of a fairy god-mother, whereas Jane's fairy god-mother is Helen Burns, the woman who struggles to give Jane the perspective of hope, forgiveness towards her oppressors and the aspiration to become self-reliant. There is no doubt that adopting these values can enable Jane to gain independence, self-esteem and self-control. At Lowood Hall, Jane likes Helen but she does not understand how she endures the punishment she receives from teachers without defending herself, "And if I were in your place I should dislike her, I should resist her. If she struck me with that rod; I should get it from her hand; I should break it under her nose" (Bronte, 46). Although Helen represents a mother figure for Jane because she comforts her, counsels her, feeds her and embraces her, she is not a possible role model for Jane due to her way of self-surrendering. Jane does not consider Helen's forgiveness and her wish not to "dwell on injustices of the past, to be happier in the present"(Bronte, 49).

Miss Temple offers Jane "a model for temperate rebellion" (Nestor, 1987:58). Also, Helen's personality and morals have a big positive influence on Jane for she learns important lessons of self-respect and self-control from Helen (Nestor, 1987:56-57). She learns to moderate her behavior, not to be so extreme in her reactions. That is why one can say that Jane is lucky to meet these two female characters at Lowood. Had Mrs. Rochester met good characters at Thornfield, she would not have been driven to insanity. On the other hand, Jane's relationships at Lowood reformed her personality and added a lot to her character development. Because of Helen and Miss Temple, at Lowood, Jane's attitudes change: she learns to value friendship and spiritual support over material comfort: "I would not now have exchanged Lowood with all its privations for Gateshead and its daily luxuries" (Bronte, 64). At Lowood, Jane has new experience; she matures and gains knowledge through education. Jane acknowledges the importance of Miss Temple to her development: "to her instruction I owed the best part of my acquirements; her friendship and society had been my continued solace; she had stood me in the stead of mother, governess, and, latterly, companion" (Bronte, 72).

Miss temple is the first positive female role model that Jane encounters. Jane stayed at Lowood as a teacher but a couple of years after finishing her studies. However, when Miss Temple leaves and takes "the serene atmosphere" with her, Jane finds herself "left in my natural element, beginning to feel the stirring of old emotions" (Bronte, 72). And because she wants to see more of the world outside Lowood, Jane decides to work as a governess at Thornfield Hall, where she meets and admires Rochester just as a source for getting belonging, her sole aim in life. Indeed, Rochester rides into Jane's life as a fairy tale dark prince resembling a Byronic hero to some extent. Charlotte Bronte's words about her hero" "It was exactly one form a Bessie's Gytrash-a lion-like creature with long hair and a huge head: it passed me however, quietly enough, not staying to look up, with a strange preter canine eyes, in my face, as I half expected it would: The horse followed, a tall steed, and on its back a rider" (Bronte, 97). It seems that Bronte admires such a conventional kind of a man. Rochester appears the very essence of patriarchal energy, but this male model is absolutely unsuitable choice for defending the social position of the Victorian woman, especially Bronte herself, who unconsciously, admires and sustains him for she never attributes any passive qualities concerning his harsh relationship with his foreigner wife.

Jane's relationship with Rochester

Jane states her independence from the very beginning. Her major problem is to find a home and to enjoy a sense of belonging. Rather than adhering to Victorian standards by preserving dependence on either a male relative or even a husband, she asserts autonomy from the novel's start to the end when she states: "Reader, I married him" (Bronte, 452). Jane's statement is a strong announcement to be an independent person who has performed an action which happens to be a marriage, something for which a male is usually responsible. Instead, Jane is showing her power; and rather than being taken as a spouse, she is the one who obtains one. And this point of view is against the claim that Rochester has possession of Jane by summoning her to be his wife. Had Rochester never been physically and spiritually damaged after the fire accident, the case might have been different. Jane does not realize that her happiness blinks her, a happiness based on the fact that she is happy to marry the one who has been her master before.
At the end of the novel, Bronte announces that Jane manages to obtain the identity, independence and belonging. But the point is that had Rochester been physically and spiritually balanced, one would have been convinced of this confused end. The final romantic union between the blind Rochester and Jane does not satisfy the reader, particularly the contemporary one. What is evidently true about Jane's relationship with Rochester is that she needed him very much, needed belonging to a family: "I felt at times as if he were my relation rather than my master... I ceased to pine for kindred: my thin crescent-destiny seems to enlarge; the blanks of existence were filled up; my bodily health improved; I gathered flesh and strength" (Bronte, 128). The relationship between Rochester and Jane is unequal on many points; he is twenty years older than her, much more experienced. He is rich and she is poor and he is her master. For Jane, Rochester appears as "father-man". He could be the projection of the author's longing for her ideal man which was a "father-surrogate" (Dooley, 1920:241), just to compensate her fatherless childhood. The mother figure, for Jane, was represented by many females. Hence, Jane's marriage with Rochester and their love is a matter of doubt. Convincingly, one can say that both of them need each other, particularly Rochester who needs a constant female fellow even before Bertha's tragic death. It seems that he became too exhausted from his sexual relationships with many mistresses. Because of his physical and spiritual injury, he needs a faithful, reasonable female to accompany him in his dark future journey.

The episode of Rochester's and Jane's marriage is not extremely obvious. Is Rochester going to marry Jane? He alone knows that he has an actual wife even though she suffers insanity, or he just makes a cunning plan to push Jane to become his mistress in one way or another. He simply realizes that he cannot marry a second wife (Jane) according to Christianity. If Rochester really loves Jane, he will not ask her to become his mistress, on the contrary, he will confess his marriage with Bertha. Of course, Rochester is aware of Jane's independent character and her self-esteem, but he fails to respect her intellect. True love requires frankness and openness between the two partners. Jane refuses to enter into a union that would not based on settlement, belonging and equality. As Boumelha (1990) points out, to be Rochester's mistress would be a form of slavery or dependency for Jane" (62).

Rochester wants to make Jane a mistress for him, forgetting the fact that he despised his relationships with mistresses in front of Jane: "I could not live alone; so I tried the companionship of mistresses.... What was their beauty to me in a few weeks?... Hiring a mistress is the next worse thing to buying a slave: both are often by nature, and always by position, inferior: and to live familiarly with inferiors is degrading. I now hate the recollection of the time I passed with Celine, Giacinla, and Clara" (Bronte, 275). Thus, for the sake of self-respect and independence, Jane decides to leave Rochester and Thornfield.

On her way through the moors, she accidently loses her few possessions, and has to live the life of a beggar. But Jane is still able to maintain her endurance: "Life, however, was yet in my possession, with all its requirements, and pains, and responsibilities fulfilled. I set out" (Bronte, 287). Finally, she survives at Marsh End and ends up at the door of the three siblings of the Rivers family, who admit her under their roof and take care of her. This stage at Marsh End is vital for the development of her identity: she gains knowledge of her origin and discovers new relations, her cousins. After passing many journeys in her way for enjoying belonging, it seems that "Jane gathers strength from her friendship and relationships with other women, such as Diana and Mary at Marsh End" (Spaull, 1989:97). As Eagleton (24) states, "For someone as socially isolated as Jane, the self is all one has; and it is not to be recklessly invested in dubious enterprises." Jane insists on the uniqueness and value of the self and refuses self-sacrifice on behalf of St John and his mission. St John, like Rochester, is an important character in Jane's identity formation and in her balancing between the sense of dependency and autonomy. St John's marriage offer consists of a social function that neglects any personal aspirations, while Rochester offers a personal fulfillment at the expense of a respectable social position. Indeed, neither the "loveless conventionalism" offered by St John nor the "illicit passion" offered by Rochester can satisfy Jane's needs as such (Eagleton, 1988:22). The impassionate Rochester is a contrast to the passionless St John: "I do not want a stranger – unsympathizing, alien, different from me, I want my kindred: those with whom I have full fellow-feeling" (Bronte, 343). Indeed, Jane's and Rochester's marriage is based on equal and mutual dependency and autonomy. From her five journeys at Gateshead, Lowood, Thornfield, End Marsh, and Ferdinand, it seems that Jane is a lucky girl, for she can achieve her materialistic and spiritual dreams and ambitions.

**Jane, Bertha and Rochester as searchers for a partner**

Jane's bitter suffering on her way to get belonging and autonomy was much covered in many papers, articles, and even academic theses. The goal here is to have a literary critical vision towards Charlotte Bronte, and how she has had a racial vision in tackling the relationship of Jane, Rochester, and Bertha. But Bronte's vision does not mean that Mrs. Rochester and Jane are completely different characters. Rather, these two female characters share a lot of similar physical, spiritual and
social conditions that affected severely on Mrs. Rochester's case, but were a prompting and fruitful path for Jane to achieve her goals in life.

Mrs. Rochester is always alone in her prison at the attic, and she is considered a foreigner and rejected by a husband who becomes neither a lover nor a brother or even a friend. From his wife's psychological disorders, it is apparent that Mr. Rochester never tried to exert any effort to break her loneliness and troubles. He never sacrificed his happiness or time in trying to find a medical or psychological solution for his wife. Instead, he pursues his loving relationships, trying to forget his miserable wife. This irresponsible behavior is quite expected from Rochester, especially his father and brother that promote his marriage to Bertha Mason because of her family's offered dowry of thirty thousand pounds.

In regard to Jane's identity, the character of Bertha Rochester is essential. Bertha, the Creole, and Rochester were originally married in Jamaica, where the young Rochester was dazzled by her beauty, Charlotte Bronte, due to her conventionality, tries to convince her readers that Rochester is a victim for his unlucky marriage with the mad Bertha. She reveals that after marriage, Rochester discovered the true nature of his wife, and he even names "debauchery" as one of the attributes of Bertha (Bronte, 275), which seems crossing the line of the acceptable female sexual behavior. Bertha is presented as having inherited her insanity from her mother, as Rochester accounts:

Bertha Mason is mad; and she came of a mad family; idiots and maniacs through three generations? Her mother, the Creole, was both a mad woman and a drunkard!-as I found out after I had wed the daughter- for they were silent on family secrets before. Bertha, like a dutiful child, copied her parents in both points. (Bronte, 257-258).

Bronte announces Bertha to be "the creole" as if she wants to consider her an outsider, not English, and this is an obvious proof of Bronte's conventionality. Bronte does not condemn even Rochester for marrying Bertha for her beauty, or for imprisoning her alone in the attic instead of attempting to send her for a psychiatrist to cure her. Rather than solving his problems with his wife to find a serious solution for her troubles, he escapes through making a comparison between Jamaica (Bertha's homeland) and his native England. Europe appears to him as a safe and sound refuge:

A wind fresh from Europe blew over the Ocean.... The sweet wind from Europe was still whispering in the refreshed leaves, and the Atlantic was thundering in glorious liberty; my heart dried up and scorched for a long time, swelled to the tone, and filled with living blood- my being longed for renewal- my soul thirsted for a pure draught. I saw hope revive- and felt regeneration possible. From a flowery at the bottom of my garden I gazed over the sea- bluer than the sky: the old world was beyond; clear prospects opened...(Bronte, 272).

This idealized picture of Europe highlights the superiority and dominance of Europe as opposed to the corrupt Jamaica, and its unpleasant representative, Bertha. Jane, the British, is expected to be admired and loved. For Rochester, the two places, Jamaica and England, represent respectively Bertha and Jane. Bertha does not meet Rochester's requirements for ideal femininity. She can be considered a "female subaltern", and this term refers to "those who are lower in position or who... are lower in rank, the homeless, the unemployed, the subsistence farmers, the day laborers- in short those groups with the least power of all" (Bertens, 2008: 170). Bertha is a true example of a female subaltern. She cannot speak, and the reader has no chance to know about her vision of the events that happen around her. Bertha's history is narrated by Rochester and her present state in the novel by Jane. Bertha is not allowed to speak for herself -- a white European man and a white European woman speak for her, so she is doubly marginalized and silenced.

Indeed, Bertha's violent rebellion is analogical to the resistance that Jane shows as a child in the face of the repression and imprisonment that she feels when her aunt confines to the scary red-room. Jane shows rebellion first at Gateshead against the tyrannical attitude of John Reed and the unjust attitude of Mrs. Reed; then she shows rebellious spirit in her early conversations with Helen Burns at Lowood. Bertha's rebellion is a psychiatric disease while Jane's has a strong purpose, because she struggles to achieve her own interests: to get home and money things she was deprived of. Jane Eyre does not seek a rebellion to achieve independence and identity for the English girl during the nineteenth century. The proof is that the child and early adolescent Jane rebels more overtly, but when she grows up and learns the Victorian social etiquettes, her rebellion becomes moderated. According to Vanden and Chris (1999:83-84), "a metamorphosis from dependency to autonomy was at the heart of the Victorian idea of adolescence", and "the belief that the ideal adult ought to be independent and autonomous" was pervasive in Victorian culture. This point of view can be applied to men or women, so Jane's seeking for independence was, more or less, an attempt to get comfort and success in life, and not struggling for achieving a universal goal regarding the Victorian woman and their bitter sufferings. Of course, there are different stages in the road to autonomy, such as leaving home for school, choosing a vocation, marriage and setting up one's own family and household. Doubtless, this basic framework for development was similar to both sexes, and in Jane Eyre, one can see how Jane, as a young adult,
goes through these stages in her development to become herself as a more autonomous individual.

Rochester's sole aim, after meeting Jane, is to find autonomy and happiness whatever the method regardless of Jane's concepts of independence and self-esteem. His motives are to redeem himself from his associations with Bertha. He finds in Bertha a "nature wholly alien" to his own, a "cast of mind common, low, narrow, and singularly incapable of being led to anything higher, expanded to anything larger" (Bronte, 333). Rochester, here, describes his wife as a woman without a soul. Instead of remaining faithful to his wife, he roams Europe seeking "a good and intelligent woman, whom I could Love" (Bronte, 337); however, he finds only the "unprincipled and violent, mindless, and faithless mistresses (338). And although he realizes that, hiring a mistress is a shameful action, he persists on the course- even with Jane, his love as he pretends.

Charlotte Bronte equivocates in her presentation of Bertha; she never fully indicates whether Bertha is inherently soulless or only made so by Rochester's unkind and selfish treatment of her. Bertha enters Jane's room, not to harm her as Rochester fears, but to rend the veil. From Rending the veil, in two parts, may be explained as "emanating resentment of and jealousy toward Jane or, it may be viewed as a warning to Jane about "veiled existence she would have to lead as Rochester's harem slave" (Joyce Zonana, 1991:170). Indeed, this action reflects the two cases. If Bronte was objective in her treatment towards Bertha, The reader would have met a different end for Jane. The marriage of Jane and Rochester is hardly convincing, a marriage based not on love but on only pure interest. Rochester needs an intelligent and good woman just to respond to his sensual and spiritual needs (Autonomy), whereas Jane searches for someone to settle with him (Home and Belonging). Many critics claim that Jane seeks true love in her relationship with Rochester; otherwise, she would have married St. John. But the author is against this point of view that Bronte tried to convince the Victorian society with it. St. John needs Jane, not as a wife, but just as a tool. St. John plans to travel to India as a missionary, and this is another obstacle in front of Jane who wants to stop her journeys and enjoy a settled and secured life.

Jane's and Bertha's cases can be summarized by saying that one is able to overcome obstacles (Jane) while Bertha, who was born within wealth and upper class society, is cast aside, rejected and destroyed. Since these two characters are females and considered wild, the question is, how did Jane Eyre, the character born underprivileged manage socially and monetarily to climb her way to autonomy while Bertha, born with monetary means for financial freedom, found herself trapped and held against her will? The author does not sympathize with Rochester, only because he never exerted any slight effort to rescue Bertha as a human being, regardless of being his wife. As for Bertha's insanity, it is claimed that "Victorian women were more vulnerable to insanity than men because the instability of their reproductive systems interferes with their sexual, emotional, and rational control" (The Female Malady, 55). Rochester is, doubtless, interested in Jane. He pursues her and claims that she is his equal, "his behavior suggests that [Jane] can be neither his equal nor his likeness" instead, Jane becomes "his object, his possession, [as well as] an extension of himself" (123).

George Eliot, a Victorian author and critic, showed her distaste for Jane's escape and refusal to become Rochester's mistress. Eliot believed Jane should have a better reason than "self-sacrifice[to a] nobler cause than that of a diabolical law which claims a man soul and body to a putrefying carcass" (qtd, in height 268). George Eliot believed marriage to be a distasteful law that hindered people. She believed that if Jane had stayed with Rochester as mistress, she would still have her autonomy rather than taking on Rochester's name with him holding legal status over Jane. Contrary to Eliot's peculiar vision, it can be argued that Jane's refusal to become Rochester's mistress at Thornfield asserts her self-control and power. Jane Eyre is not a romantic girl, and she never loses her control over herself; otherwise, she will get no respect from the part of Rochester. Rochester himself admits that a mistress is a slave. If Jane accepted to become his mistress, she would be a slave with no autonomy, independence, home, and identity. As a mistress, Jane would still be economically dependent upon Rochester, something for which Jane's individual self-consciousness would not stand.

Another supposition worthy of mentioning in tackling Jane's path for gaining autonomy is that if Jane has not become her uncle's heiress, and if Rochester still is not physically ruined, while attempting to rescue his wife in the fire that destroys Thornfield, one will be utterly convinced that Jane's and Rochester's union is wonderful, based on love not on exchange of interests. After the fire at Thornfield, Rochester becomes dependent on his servants to help him find his way around the house. When Jane returns to him, Rochester has no choice but give her equal share, something Jane wanted from the beginning. To signify this change, the watch chain he previously threatens to use as a leash on her is now relinquished to Jane. She has become his sight and right hand, in the literal sense.

Throughout the novel, Brontë plays with the dichotomy between external beauty and internal beauty. Both Bertha Mason and Blanche Ingram are described as stunningly beautiful, but, in each case, the external beauty obscures an internal ugliness. Bertha's beauty and sensuality blinded Mr. Rochester to her hereditary madness, and it was only after their marriage that he gradually recognized her true nature. Blanche's beauty hides her haughtiness and pride, as well as her desire to marry Mr. Rochester.
only for his money. Yet, in Blanche’s case, Mr. Rochester seems to have learned not to judge by appearances, and he eventually rejects her, despite her beauty. Bronte makes it clear that only Jane, who lacks the external beauty of typical Victorian heroines, has the inner beauty that appeals to Mr. Rochester. Her intelligence, wit, and calm morality express a far greater personal beauty than that of any other character in the novel. Bronte is so naïve to state this point of view that not all beautiful women are failures, and not all the ugly or moderate-beauty women are the best one in the world. But Brontë clearly intends to highlight the importance of personal development and growth rather than superficial appearances. Once Mr. Rochester loses his hand and eyesight, they are also on equal footing in terms of appearance: both must look beyond superficial qualities in order to love each other.

The last chapter in Jane Eyre reveals this union when she boldly states: “Reader, I married him” (Bronte, 452). Jane’s speech reveals the passive feelings of a woman suffered a lot of social complications. Now, Jane no longer calls him "Master". Instead, she uses his Christian name, Edward, even to the point of saying "My Edward" to show that he belongs to her and she belongs to him; her sole aim in life finally became a truth (455). She never hesitates to explain her equality stating: “I am my husband’s eyes as full as he is mine” (Bronte 454). This is directly opposite of the life Rochester had originally envisioned. Jane is the narrator of this story, therefore, she controls the way the reader views Mrs. Rochester. And, unfortunately, though Jane’s quest for self-autonomy, Mrs. Rochester is oppressed and pictured as “the social self-consciousness can thrive” (The Female Maladay, 67). Jane’s first introduction to Mrs. Rochester’s presence is that of a “demonic laugh-low, suppressed, and deep” (Bronte, 153). Bertha is kept in the attic, which was common for the wealthier class during the nineteenth century in order to avoid sullying a family’s good reputation by having a family member committed to an asylum (The Female Maladay, 26). She is kept hidden away on the third floor, much like Jane during her childhood outbursts of passionate rage at her Aunt Reed’s house.

Rather than giving Bertha a proper title or name, Jane continues to describe Mrs. Rochester as "the lunatic" or a beast with human clothes (Bronte, 296). Jane tries to strip any sense of femininity from Bertha as if to remove any compassion from the Victorian audience. She also describes her as “a big woman, in stature almost equating her husband, and corpulent besides: she showed virile force in the contest- more than once she almost throttled him, athletic as he was” (Bronte, 296). From Jane’s conventional and selfish description to Mrs. Rochester, it becomes clear that Bertha lacks any feminine qualities that would relate her to the reader. She can easily overtake her husband in strength. Bronte wants to prove to the Victorian reader that Bertha’s physical features have no womanly qualities. And doubtless, this description takes away any form of compassion for Bertha. Nobody sympathizes with Mrs. Rochester’s case. And this gives indication for the Victorian reader, in particular, that Bertha’s status could never be reformed.

**Conclusion**

Charlotte Bronte is a conventional writer. If she really defends the Victorian woman, it will be better for her not to attack Bertha, but to sympathize with her circumstances. But it can be concluded that she treats Bertha as an outsider not a human being, but an animal that must be got off. Ironically, for a woman who believes in her lights for love, respect, identity, belonging and autonomy, Jane has no trouble reducing another woman’s self to the hands of the very society Jane wishes to escape from. Though Jane is usually vocal about unjust treatment, “she approves Rochester’s summary and callous treatment of his wife; and she is manifestly enthusiastic about the exploitation of colonized peoples” (Roy, 1989).

Jane also negates Bertha’s rights as oppressed woman. Rather than allowing Bertha to speak for herself, Jane allows Mr. Rochester to tell his first wife’s story. Rochester further strips Bertha of humanity, giving more credence to Jane’s humanity within her autonomy. He claims Bertha to be mad. Furthermore, “She came from a mad family:- idiots and maniacs through three generations! Her mother, the Creole, was both a mad woman and a drunkard Bertha, like a dutiful, copied her parent…” (Bronte, 300).

Bronte takes all her provisions to convince the Victorian reader of Jane’s honorable case in order to get belonging, independence, and identity. But it seems, after reading the novel, that the true heroine is Bertha who could achieve nothing in life but misery, frustration, jealousy and losing identity, simply because she is not the focus of Bronte. On the contrary, defending and sustaining Bertha’s situation will perhaps prevent Jane from her pursuing her dreams. This another strong proof that Bronte, unconsciously, pays little attention to the Victorian age’s injuries concerning the position of woman regardless of any human ideals that transcend place and time.

The reader and Jane know Bertha as both insane and Creole. Her “madness and licentiousness are inextricably linked to her Creole Blood, whereas Jane’s sound and Chaste nature is the legacy of her English inheritance” (Grudin, 147). Indeed, Bertha is a double outsider: first an outsider through her psychological sufferings and an outsider in that she is not fully British since she was born in a British colony. Throughout the novel, Bertha is...
portrayed as being ugly, ‘a vampire’. She is always cast as the outsider and other to the point of being not human “first seen darkly as a ghost, then as a goblin, as vampiric and lycanthropic” (Grdin, 147).

Jane Eyre may be seen in a postmodernist light as an expression of Charlotte Brontë’s own character. The players she peoples her world with seem to be aspects of herself and Jane seems to represent her totality. Of course, Brontë has her selfish and silly purpose in creating Bertha’s character in this way to serve a certain purpose, but the damage given to Bertha is great. Though women and their rights appear to be of importance to Bronte, the novel does not “imbue the West Indian mad woman with speech, reason, a history, a grammar of motives, or even a human personality” (Roy, 1989). The reader is left with an unclear study of Bertha’s silence. And due to her silence, the reader’s knowledge of her is that of a degenerate woman who could not control her own passion.

Jane Eyre has become self-sufficient, formed her own values and morals by life’s lessons, and matured into her finishing role as the wife of Mr. Rochester. She has grown strong and secure in herself, and it is very unlikely that she will ever lose this. Her knowledge, and her morals and values can never be taken from her; her money, and thus her self-sufficiency and some of her self-reliance may disappear, but she cannot lose her skills as a governess, and thus will always have some means of finding employment and re-establishing self-sufficiency. Her belief in her equality to others cannot be taken from her, because it is an inherent part of her knowledge and values. Overall, she has grown from an impassioned, undisciplined, and hasty child, into a mature, strong, careful woman, secure in her belief in herself.

Conflict of Interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

REFERENCES


