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Jane Eyre: Serving the Empire

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Abstract

GayatriSpivak believes that the 19th century British literature is under the complete influence of British imperialism and colonialism. Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* aptly suits this claim. This study, through applying theories of Spivak's and Homi K. Bhabha intends to display the text's adherence to the colonial ideologies of its time. Moreover, as Edward Saidwrites, in order to have a broad perspective of a literary work one should open it out to both what is involved in and what is excluded from the text. Such reading, which Said calls contrapuntal reading, is a form of reading back a text from the point of view of the colonized. Hence, this article attempts to offer a contrapuntal reading of *Jane Eyre* in order to uncover Charlotte Bronte's faithfulness to the imperialist system of the time and *Jane Eyre's* devotion to serving the colonial tendencies of the Empire.

Keywords: postcolonialism, contrapuntal reading, *Jane Eyre*, Spivak, Bhabha, Said.

Introduction

Colonialism can be defined as the act of invasion and control of other people's countries and cultures. However, it is not "merely the expansion of various European powers into Asia, Africa or the Americas from the sixteenth century onwards; it has been a recurrent and widespread feature of human history" (Loomba, 2). Colonialism did more than extracting wealth and property from the colonized countries; they made a complex relationship between the colonized nations and their own. In the process of colonization the dominant country makes an interference with the cultural and political structures of thecolonized nation (Ibid., 3-6).

Margaret Kohn mentions that colonialism is "a practice of domination, which involves the subjugation of one people to another. The legitimacy of colonialism has been structured on the justification of the 'civilizing mission', which suggested that a period of political domination over the 'uncivilized' societies "to advance to the point where they were capable of[...] self-government" (60-2). As Ronald J. Horvath puts it colonialism is a form of domination in which some individuals and groups control the behavior of the other (Horvath, 46).

To define the term "subaltern" one should refer to the military glossary: it refers to an officer in a low position. The Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci used the word to refer to the working masses who needed the intellectuals to control and organize (Habib, 748). These groups are subject to the domination of the dominant groups. Needless to say, the subaltern classes do not have any

access to social institutions to represent themselves; in fact they are represented by the ruling class.

GayatriChakravortySpivak's theories and literary criticism have had a great influence on reading literary works in relation to the colonial and post-colonial approaches. In her high-ranking essay, "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism," she illuminates that the role of British imperialism in nineteenth-century British literature has been ignored by some critics. In her view, if this fact were remembered not only in British literature but in the literature of the whole European colonizing cultures of imperialism, we would be able to produce a narrative which does not consider the Third World as far away countries which are waiting to be recovered and interpreted by English discourses of imperialism (Hale, 675). This narrative should be produced so that the subaltern find an opportunity to tell all his untold stories since so far "the subaltern really had no access to those narratives of nationalism, those narratives of internationalism, nationalism, secularism, all of those things" (Spivak, 1990, 142).

Put another way, a narrative is needed to narrate what has really happened to the exploited and peripheral nations. This concept is closely related with historiography which was discussed in the previous section; in "A Literary Representation of the Subaltern: a Woman's Text from the Third World" Spivak mentions that historiography's attempt is to show what really happened not what has been said to have happened by those who had the authority to narrate (Spivak, 1987, 241).

One of the most important and complicated phases of Spivak's theory is the concern to highlight the individuals who have been marginalized in history and society whether due to their race, gender, language or class. Stephen Morton in *GayatriChakravortySpivak* observes that Spivak's ongoing attempt is to find a critical vocabulary that can properly describe the experiences of those people and social groups who have been dispossessed and exploited by European colonialism. As an intellectual figure, Spivak is committed to articulating the difficulties and lives of these groups. Her attempt is to make sure that their histories are represented in a proper and non-exploitive way. For her the words which have been using for such groups do not have the ability to present the lives of people who were rejected and consequently invisible by history (Morton, 45). Due to such injustice Spivak proposes the word subaltern since it is a flexible word for her, as she affirms in an interview: "I like the word 'subaltern' for one reason [...] I like that, because it has no theoretical rigor" (Spivak, 1990, 141). Hence, Spivak uses this term to "encompass a range of different subject positions which are not predefined by dominant political discourses" (Morton, 45).

Bart Moore Gilbert in "Spivak and Bhabha" discusses Spivak's intense engagement with the predicament of female subaltern. This emphasis on the women in postcolonial criticism is because Spivak regards them to be subject to a greater degree to cultural and economical suppression than their male counterparts (Gilbert, 454).

Introduced by Edward Said, contrapuntal reading refers to a form of 'reading back' a literary text from the point of view of the colonized in order to show that how "the submerged" but central presence of the empire appears in classic texts. Reading a text contrapuntally means being aware simultaneously of the dominant history and the existing but "concealed histories" which resist the dominant one (Ashcroft and Ahluwalia, 92). In such reading the constitutive power of imperialism of the text is revealed, since the empire "functions for much the European nineteenth century as a codified, if only marginally visible, presence in fiction" (Said, 1983, 75). The aim of contrapuntal reading is to make this code much more visible.

In *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said writes that,

in practical terms, ‘contrapuntal reading’ as I have called it means reading a text with an understanding of what is involved when an author shows, [...] The point is that contrapuntal reading must take account of both processes, that of imperialism and that of resistance to it, which can be done by extending our reading of the texts to include what was forcibly excluded [...] In reading a text, one must open it out both to what went into it and to what its author excluded. (66-7)

To have a contrapuntal reading of Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*, one should discuss the text not merely in a feminist approach. In order to gain a wide perspective of the novel one should delve into it deeply so that the hidden ideologies become highlighted and more visible. The following parts of this chapter attempt to offer a contrapuntal reading of the novel to bring these ideologies to stage, the ideologies which are tuned with the colonial approaches of 19th century England.

Self and Other

In *Jane Eyre* Bertha, Rochester’s mad wife, is locked up in the attic by him, and eventually sets Thornfield on fire. We do not receive much information about her; unlike other characters she is not given any chance to be observed throughout the novel. She has no narrative and her only means of communication is her strange laughs heard occasionally in the course of the novel. In fact, as Adrienne Rich puts it: “we see little of Bertha Rochester; she is heard and sensed rather than seen” (Rich, 2001, 476).

Norman Sherry believes that the inclusion of a mad Creole was not necessary for Brontë’s novel (Sherry, 69). But why does Brontë create such character? Certainly the creation of the Creole lunatic wife is not an accident. Bertha has no voice in Brontë’s novel, thus the most speaking figures of the story _Jane and Rochester_ describe her. Their narratives thus become the discourse of the power, since narrative is among the principle means, in Bran Nicole’s view, by which the authoritative group of the society can impose its own values over the subjugated group (Nicol, 122). In their descriptions of Bertha, they construct her as their ‘other’ to “consolidate [themselves] as sovereign subject[s]” (Spivak, 1985, 247). Accordingly, the existence of the colonized Bertha is crucial for the colonizer to establish his/her Othering, and hence his/her authority.

The following will discuss how Bertha who has “no access to [the] narratives” (spivak, 1990, 142) is constructed within the colonial discourse of the novel.

Seeing the Jamaican Bertha for the first time Jane’s depiction of her is that of a beast figure; she is represented as an animal, a monster,

in the deep shade, at the further end of the room, a figure ran backwards and forwards. What *it* was, whether *beast* or human being, one could not, at first sight, tell: it groveled, seemingly, on all fours; *it* snatched and growled like some strange wild *animal*: but *it* was covered with clothing; and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, *wild as a mane*, hid *its* head and face. (*JE*, 250, emphasis added)

As Rochester's account shows Bertha has been imprisoned for ten years, hence much of her dehumanization must be the result of her confinement not its cause as Rochester claims. However, the first Mrs. Rochester is shown as a subhuman or rather non-human being so that the governess and the protagonist of the novel can be recognized as a foil character of her.

Rochester directly establishes this otherness. Referring to Bertha he acridly announces that: "that is *my wife*. Such is the sole conjugal embrace I am ever to know _ such are the endearments which are to solace my leisure hours!" (251), and then pointing to Jane he says: "and *this* is what I wished to have. This young girl, who stands so grave and quiet at the mouth of hell, looking collectedly at the gambols of a demon. I wanted her just as a change after that fierce ragout. [...] look at the difference! Compare these clear eyes with the red balls yonder_ this face with that mask" (Ibid.). In this scene the British Jane is compared to and contrasted with the West Indian Bertha. Bertha represents what Jane is not. A superior picture of Jane is portrayed in opposition to a degraded and inferior one of Bertha, for the reason that "the construction of the other is fundamental to the construction of the Self" (Ashcroft et al., 2000, 156).

Bertha who in her hometown is "the boast of Spanish Town for her beauty" (*JE*, 260), becomes the "foul German spectre _ the Vampyre" (242) in England. Bertha is called "it" since as Chris R. VandenBossche observes she is the product of the colonialist discourse of nineteenth-century England (Bossche, 51). Bertha in GayatriSpivak's comments, is "a figure produced by the axiomatic of imperialism" ("Three Women's Texts", 678). Hence, the English Jane must marry the English Rochester, even if he is blind and maimed, purify his racially inflicted pollution.

In the same scene Jane describes Bertha in this way: "the clothed *hyena* rose up, and stood tall on *itshind* feet [...] The *maniac* bellowed [...] the *lunatic* sprang" (Ibid., emphasis added). These words are spoken by the same Jane who in her famous feminist manifesto cries out for women rights, claiming that the traditional and stereotyped restrictions about women need to be resisted:

It is in vain to say human beings ought to be satisfied with tranquillity: they must have action; and they will make it if they cannot find it. Millions are condemned to a stiller doom than mine, and millions are in silent revolt against their lot. Nobody knows how many rebellions besides political rebellions ferment in the masses of life which people earth. Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. It is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex. (*JE*, 93)

Nonetheless, it seems that Jane's intention of making this speech is to defend only herself; it is only exclusive to Jane since, as it appears this manifesto is not applicable to the woman who lives in the upper regions of the same house that Jane lives. She has been prevented even form

“making puddings and knitting stockings.” Valerie Beattie notes this exclusiveness in comparing Jane’s manifesto and her treatment of Adele: she [Jane] may desire a power of vision surpassing the limits assigned to her gender and class for herself, yet she deem the norm appropriate for Adele who is forced to forget ‘her little freaks, and become obedient and teachable’ (*JE*, 104)” (Beattie, 499).

Although Jane reprimands Rochester that “you are inexorable for that unfortunate lady: you speak of her with hate _ with vindictive antipathy. It is cruel _ she cannot help being mad” (*JE*, 257), she seems to be more worried about herself than Bertha. Rochester discerning the source of her real anxiety asks her: “If you were mad, do you think I should hate you?”, and Jane immediate response is that “I do indeed sir” (Ibid.). As soon as he assures her that she is wrong and that “every atom of [her] flesh is as dear to [him] as [his] own: in pain and sickness it would be still dear” (Ibid.) Jane forgets all about Bertha and without any hesitation or doubt she believes Rochester’s explanations. Her single response is: “sir, I pity you –I do earnestly pity you” (261). She never questions the cause of Bertha’s madness or Rochester’s “cruel” behavior toward her even when he admits that she has “lucid intervals of days – sometimes weeks –” (264). Jane shows to be under her master’s complete influence; not only does not she question Rochester about such an unusual treatment of his wife, but also she sympathizes him. She submits to his lies; she does not recognize the incongruity in Rochester’s descriptions of Bertha’s habitation and the reality of it: Rochester describes it as safe and comfortable (263), while as Jane observes Bertha is “in a room without a window there burnt a fire, guarded by a high and strong fender, and a lamp suspended from the ceiling by a chain” (250). In spite of these observations, her trust in her master is not shaken.

After becoming aware of Rochester’s intention to sacrifice her honor and commit bigamy, Jane still does not detest him. She forgives Rochester’s socially unacceptable behavior both toward herself and his legitimate wife; Jane becomes blinded against what she observes and understands about Bertha and Rochester. She is not willing to destroy the idol picture she has portrayed from Rochester in her mind: “I compared him with his guests [...] contrasted [them] with his look of native pith and genuine power,” although others call Rochester “harsh-featured” and “melancholy-looking,” she notices “[his] smile _ his stern features softened; his eyes grow both brilliant and gentle, its ray both searching and sweet” (149). She credulously believes Rochester’s account and the only action she can take is merely leaving Thornfield. She does not show any active personality regarding solving the secret of Thornfield.

Bertha is prevented from female companionship. The only person attending her is Grace Poole with a “hard, plain face” and offering “few words” (91). In this regard she is once again Jane’s ‘other.’ Bertha is the ‘subaltern’ who, in Spivak’s theory, has been dispossessed, exploited and consequently invisible (Morton, 45). Although “Jane suffers different forms of deprivation (absence of parental guidance and affection, poverty, and so forth) throughout the novel” (Lamonaca, 254), she benefits from sympathetic female companionship. She has Helen Burns and Maria Temple at Lowood Academy, Diana and Mary Rivers at Moore House and in Ferndean Adele whom she describes as “a pleasing and obliging companion: docile, good-tempered, and well-principled” (*JE*, 383). Although, while in Thornfield she expresses her grief over lack of female companionship she does not qualify Bertha to become her companion. In spite of desiring liberty, grasping for liberty and uttering a prayer for liberty at the time when

Maria leaves Lowood Academy, Jane does not perceive that the same feelings can be attributed to the lonely Bertha.

Two months after Jane's departure, Bertha sets the mansion afire. An innkeeper describes the happening: "she set fire first to the hangings of the room next her own; and then she got down to a lower story, and made her way to the chamber that had been the governess's [...] and she kindled the bed there and concludes that the "mad lady" had "a spite at [the governess]" (364). An unnamed, minor character is allowed to finish Bertha's story and depict a malevolent picture of her, while Charlotte Borie detects that Bertha's action represents her desire to make a relationship with Jane (Borie, 110). Despite trying hard, Bertha is not successful in becoming close to Jane.

The reason might be found in the concepts of identity and nationhood discussed by Bhabha. Bertha is regarded as the 'other' both to Rochester and Jane. She is a non-European who highlights Rochester's and Jane's Englishness. She must remain in the margin for the imperial figures to occupy the center. Bertha is Spivak's subaltern; hence as the definition demands she should remain unprivileged: "to a certain extent the subaltern [is] always, by definition, [...] below the dominant culture" (Maggio, 427). Applying to Bhabha's argument, it could be argued that in the colonial text of *Jane Eyre* "from those traditions of political thought" Englishness has emerged "as a powerful historical idea" (Bhabha, 1994, 1).

Jane and Bertha do not become friends since their friendship would be a threat to Rochester the colonizer; if Jane and Bertha become united, a revolt against Rochester will happen. In this case one could imagine a completely different ending for the novel: Jane liberates Bertha and they both leave Rochester to take their revenge from him! However, Jane does not wish to join this rebellion, although she is under his control. Rochester by using different pet names for Jane, appears to be willing to control her: "good little girl" (*JE*, 224), "bonny we thing" (231), "childish [...] creature" (266) and "little Jane" (267). This dominance is to the extent that when leaving Thornfield she loses her own sense of self: "I abhorred myself. I had no solace from self approbation: none even from self-respect" (283). She blames herself for injuring her "master" to the extent that she becomes like a "delirious" (*Ibid.*). This is the kind of woman Rochester wishes and attempts to have: a docile obedient 'Angel of the House' under his complete control and dominance; a kind of woman he could not find in Bertha's character. Due to this fact Rochester calls Jane "my good angel" (269). Katharine Bubel believes that what Rochester claims to love about Jane is not in her, it is rather the image of the Angel in his mind which he desires to possess (Bubel, 297). Hence, he wishes to make Jane his own so that he can play his power upon her.

This 'otherness' made between Bertha and Jane is more evident when Rochester makes it clear for Jane that his hatred of Bertha is not due to her madness, and if Jane were in her place his reaction would be totally different:

if you raved, my arms should confine you, and not a strait waistcoat—your grasp, even in fury, would have a charm for me: if you flew at me as wildly as that woman did this morning, I should receive you in an embrace at least as fond as it

would be restrictive. I should not shrink from you with disgust as I did from her: in your quiet moments you should have no watcher and no nurse but me; and I could hang over you with untiring tenderness, though you gave me no smile in return; and never weary of gazing into your eyes, though they had no longer a ray of recognition for me. (*JE*, 257)

Accordingly, Rochester's deeds and speech constructs and confirms this 'othering' between Jane and Bertha since as discussed above the imperial discourse constructs its other in order to authenticate its reality: "The self-identity of the colonizing subject, indeed the identity of imperial culture, is inextricable from the alterity of colonized others, an alterity determined, according to Spivak, by a process of othering" (Ashcroft et al., 2000, 10).

Describing Bertha in youth, Rochester says: "my father [...] told me Miss Mason was the boast of Spanish Town for her beauty: and this was no lie. I found her a fine woman, in the style of Blanche Ingram; tall, dark, and majestic [...] All the men in her circle seemed to admire her and envy me" (*JE*, 260). However, after marrying her and gaining her inheritance he puts emphasis on her lack of "modesty," "benevolence," "candor" and "refinement in her mind or manners" (*Ibid.*). It is only after his father's and brother's death and becoming "rich enough" that Rochester describes Bertha as being "gross," "impure" and "depraved" (261). He confesses that he was attracted by her charm: "I was dazzled, stimulated: my senses were excited" (260). He also acknowledges that this marriage was planned by his father and brother and agreed by him because of money, yet he claims that he was trapped to marry her by Bertha herself and her family. Reaching a dead-end in his marital life Rochester points his finger at Bertha and his family and represents himself as the sole innocent person. He claims that Bertha "flattered me, and lavishly displayed for my pleasure her charms and accomplishments" (260), while we observe that it is Jane who in the occasions when Rochester attempts to advance her "rallie[s]", "quail[s]", "whet[s][her] tongue" and speaks with "asperity" (233) in order to analyze the effects on Rochester:

From less to more, I worked him up to considerable irritation; then, after he had retired, in dudgeon, quite to the other end of the room, I got up, and saying, I wish you good-night, sir,' in my natural and wonted respectful manner, I slipped out by the side-door and got away. The system thus entered on I pursued during the whole season of probation; and with the best success. He was kept, to be sure, rather cross and crusty: but on the whole I could see he was excellently entertained; and that a lamb-like submission and turtle-dove sensibility, while fostering his despotism more, would have pleased his judgment, satisfied his common-sense, and even suited his taste, less. (*JE*,233-4)

As the quotation illustrates Jane tactfully applies different strategies to charm Rochester. Millicent Bell in "Tale of the Governess" explains that the governesses' situation in the 19th century England was that of deprivation and constriction. They always felt loss of home and family (Bell, 265). As Susan Lydon notes according to Victorian law "property was transmitted through the male line and one of the only ways women could obtain shelter was through marriage to a land-owning male (Lydon, 24). Having knowledge over this condition Jane says Rochester that "wherever you are is my home – my only home" (*JE*, 209) and she attempts to

attract Rochester to herself and she is successful in doing so: his desire of Jane grows and she changes to the sexual other. In another scene evoking Rochester's desire toward herself, Jane starts complementing her cousin, St. John, and mentions that he loves her and she likes him, too. Then, she carefully observes the effect on him: "I perceived, of course, the drift of my interlocutor. Jealousy had got hold of him: she stung him; but the sting was salutary" (376). While oblivious to his wife's sexual needs, Rochester becomes interested in the inexperienced Jane. When Bertha for the first time escapes her prison, her impulse is to meet Rochester in his bedchamber at night. Before quenching the fire, Jane describes the "tongues of flame darted round the bed: the curtains were on fire" but "in the midst of blaze and vapour, Mr. Rochester lay stretched motionless, in deep sleep" (127). Marion Harland believes that by setting her husband's bedchamber on fire, Bertha expresses her repressed sexual desires and Rochester's sleep in the same situation represents ignoring and suppressing such desires (Harland, 528).

Hence, Bertha uses fire to show her physical needs while it is Jane who quenches the same fire and becomes the subject of Rochester's attention. Consequently, Bertha becomes Jane's other once again _ a sexual other this time _ and lets Jane marry Rochester.

But to what extent is Jane's character plausible? Are the constructed 'self' and 'other' acceptable in the modern reader's view? All we read and hear about Jane is about her virtues. Her story is a Cinderella story: a docile, virtuous girl who receives her reward at the end of the story: she marries, becomes wealthy and lives happily ever after with her husband. The reader might get tired of all these merits. From the beginning Jane is right in her decisions: she defies the unjust world of Mrs. Reeds and also that of Mr. Brocklehurst's school. She correctly rejects St. John Rivers's offer of marriage, being aware that it has nothing to offer her but oppression and she refuses to become Rochester's mistress. The oneness and inflexibility in her character can be regarded as faults. She possesses morality and social judgment right from the beginning; she is not like the protagonist of Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* who experiences moral crisis and human flaws and becomes mature. Frederick R. Karl notes that Bronte deals with the self _ "especially its demands upon reason" _ but does not allow Jane to encounter all aspects of it (Karl, 164). One can argue that Jane suffers limitations in Bronte's novel in order to fit the ideal Victorian girl and be qualified enough for her reward at the end of the story.

Rochester does not only construct 'self' and 'other' between Jane and Bertha, but also between Bertha and himself. Rochester highlights Bertha's background and hybrid inheritance: "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" (*JE*, 249). He depicts a civilized picture of himself as a deceived person and a monstrous picture of his wife: "You shall see what sort of a being I was cheated into espousing, and judge whether or not I had a right to break the compact, and seek sympathy with something at least human" (*Ibid.*). He arouses people's sympathy by introducing himself as a bestial keeper who has approached hopelessness: "Mr. Rochester then turned to the spectators: he looked at them with a smile both acrid and desolate" (250).

Bertha's ambiguous race is presented as inferior in comparison with Englishness of the main characters. She is the daughter of a West Indian mother and sister of a yellow-skinned

Richard Mason. Susan L. Meyer writes that Bertha is “clearly imagined as white” since the son of an aristocratic British family is chosen to marry her (Meyer, 2007, 48), yet the narrative constructs her as black throughout the novel. Rochester describes Bertha as “tall, dark” (*JE*, 260), claiming that “her family wished to secure me because I was of a good race” hinting that Bertha is not from the so called ‘good’ white race that he is from and doubtlessly establishing his racial discriminatory ideas.

The controversial point about the novel is that to what extent are these ‘self’ and ‘other’ constructions accepted by and believable to the reader, especially the modern reader. It can be said that Jane’s representations and many events happening for her are improbable. For instance, she is an uncommonly lucky woman. She is lucky enough to become a governess in Thornfield, to survive the typhoid at Lowood, to avoid a bigamous marriage and to find her cousins while she is helpless and desperate. It seems that in order to make Jane, a heroine in her novel, Bronte takes a great risk: the risk of making her plot improbable and turning every incident too romantically in favor of her protagonist.

The Self Writes the History

Jane Eyre’s sole narrator is Jane. She recounts the events of her life from 1799-1809 in 1819, establishing her life ‘story’ as ‘history’. Jane’s voice is dominated throughout the novel. First-person point of view is a tool in Bronte’s hands to enable her protagonist speak her mind. As FirdousAzim notes the 1847 publication of *Jane Eyre* was subtitled: ‘an autobiography edited by Currer Bell.’ The mere fact of being an autobiography claims to verisimilitude suggesting that it is a life document over which Currer Bell, in the role of the author, “had only editorial control” (Azim, 174). Considering the main theme of the novel, one can affirm that it is the growth of a central voice: Jane gains the mastery of language and establishes her identity and subjectivity within her own narrative. She has an entire mastery all over the events. Her narrative is a strong one in the course of the novel since as Joyce Carol Oates regards her she is supposed to be “the heroine of her race” (Oates, 197). The prose is so authoritative that makes the reader assured of its authenticity. She is in control of her narrative starting her story in this way:

There was no possibility of taking a walk that day. We had been wandering, indeed, in the leafless shrubbery an hour in the morning; but since dinner (Mrs. Reed, when there was no company, dined early) the cold winter wind had brought with it clouds so sombre, and a rain so penetrating, that further outdoor exercise was now out of the question. (*JE*, 5)

Such descriptions of weather and environment are certainly not favorable. Yet, Jane does not allow the reader to sympathize her in this “atmosphere of privation” (Oates, 198); immediately she continues: “I was glad of it: I never liked long walks” (*JE*, 5). She attempts to keep her authority over all the situations and events. In the final chapter of the novel describing her wedding, she asserts “Reader, I married him”_ not ‘he married me’ or even ‘we got married’_ emphasizing that it was in her power to make this marriage happen: she chose and decided to marry Rochester not vice versa.

Virginia Woolf disapproves of this explicit employment of the first person singular 'I' mentioning that this is the author's force which goes into the novel: "I hate," "I love," "I suffer" (Koutsantoni, 109). This force is not acceptable to the modern reader. It is not possible for the twenty-first century reader to agree with all the assertions made by a single person; the reader's mind is widened hence he does not believe limited perspectives. Such reader knows that "every representation of the past has specifiable ideological implications" (Hutcheon, 1988, 120); therefore, he does not restrain himself to merely one ideology, rather he expects to read and hear multiple points of view.

Leaving Lowood for Thornfield Jane desires and prays for three things: "liberty," "change or stimulus" and "a new servitude" (*JE*, 72). However, her ending seems to be like her third wish. She becomes a nurse and housekeeper to the disabled Rochester. Her fate was not to enjoy Rochester's companionship in his prime and healthy days, when he was a strong man ruling Thornfield. Rather what life offers her is attending her maimed husband. In spite of this fact, she presents such activities as indulging her "sweetest wishes" (384), mentioning that she is satisfied with everything and can make sure that things run under her supervision. Mitchell and Osland emphasize that Jane's claim of happiness and indulging her sweetest wishes at the end are just small comforts to a reader who has expected more of a heroine who claimed equal rights for women to exercise their faculties and display their abilities (Mitchell and Osland, 179). It seems that Bronte's heroine heartily agrees that the "pretty gold ring [...] on the fourth finger of" a woman's hand is "a talisman" which removes "all difficulties" (*JE*, 228) and at last returns to the Victorian domesticity. In *The Nineteenth-Century Novel* (2000) Delia da Sousa Correa argues that marriage with Rochester may even reduce Jane to an "ornamental commodity" like Blanche Ingram (113).

Surprisingly, Jane appears to be naïve to enjoy such destiny at the end of her tale. If we wish to prognosticate whether Jane will have a happy married life with Rochester or not we should remember his motives for marrying Jane. John Sutherland writes that Rochester marries Jane since he cannot marry Blanche Ingram. Moving her wife from West Indies to England, he chooses a partner whom he can marry without any public attention (Sutherland, 79). Therefore, when Blanche Ingram leaves the stage, the "poor and obscure, and small and plain" (*JE*, 217) Jane comes to Rochester's eyes and is supposed to take care of the mutilated man all her life. It seems that such life offers Jane nothing but an unsure position within the society. Jane's struggle throughout the novel was to escape isolation and join a society that respected her, but in marriage with Rochester she gains a secluded world and lack of community.

Despite experiencing loneliness early in childhood by living with the Reeds, a family which she knows she can never be a true member of and in spite of being aware of the fact that "human beings must love something" to the extent that she finds no way other than finding pleasure "in loving and cherishing a faded graven image, shabby as a miniature scarecrow" while "in the dearth of worthier objects of affection" (23), she still prefers to live in the "isolated romantic utopia" (Colon, 20) which separates Rochester and her from the outside world.

Although it seems that the financially secure and sexually fulfilled Jane has the ability to resolve all the conflicts in the last pages of her tale and is absolutely satisfied with becoming Rochester's amanuensis, her act of writing should be taken into consideration. She has an urge to

write her life story which belies her claims to contentment in life. As Lisa Sternlieb in *The Female Narrator in the British Novel* mentions Jane's writing is a revenge novel that exposes Rochester's cruelty (Sternlieb, 18).

To sum up, although Jane narrates and writes the novel holding power and authority over the characters and incidents, her assumptions and judgments which make her life history are undermined due to the fact that history has "no existence in and out of" itself. "It is we who constitute [it] as the objects of our understanding" (Hutcheon, 1988, 111).

Mission of Civilization or Colonization?

St. John Rivers is the minister in Morton and along with his Mary and Diana takes Jane in when she runs away from Thornfield. They are later discovered to be Jane's cousins. St. John is mostly reserved and cold. He proposes Jane and invites her to go to India with him as a missionary's wife.

St. John is not successful in marrying Jane and make her a missionary's wife going with him to the colonies, still he is victorious to bend Jane towards submission under his spell, Jane admits that,

I found him [...] an exacting master he expected me to do a great deal; and when I fulfilled his expectations, he, in his own way, fully testified his approbation. By degrees, he acquired a certain influence over me that *took away my liberty of mind*: his praise and notice were more *restraining* than his indifference. I could no longer talk or laugh freely when he was by, because a tiresomely importunate instinct reminded me that vivacity (at least in me) was distasteful to him. I was so fully aware that only serious moods and occupations were acceptable, that in his presence every effort to sustain or follow any other became vain: *I fell under a freezing spell*. When he said 'go,' I went; 'come,' I came; 'do this,' I did it. But I did not love my *servitude*: I wished, many a time, he had continued to neglect me. (339, emphasis added)

St. John puts Jane under so much pressure that she almost yields: "I was tempted to cease struggling with him _ to rush down the torrent of his will into the gulf of his existence, and there lose my own" (*JE*, 356).

Regarding Jane, St. Rivers believes that he is superior to her, should guide her in life and without him Jane would be misled. His justification is that he is a parson and certainly more privileged in this regard, while Jane is an ignorant figure in an urgent need of being civilized. He believes that he is aware of realities which are hidden to the ordinary people: "God and nature intended you for a missionary's wife. It is not personal, but mental endowments they have given you: you are formed for labour, not for love. A missionary's wife you must—shall be. You shall be mine: I claim you—not for my pleasure, but for my Sovereign's service" (*JE*, 343). He justifies all his desires and ruling tendencies as solely in favor of his so-called "Sovereign's service."

No doubt that in St. John's view the Indian people need such a savior like him; certainly they are much more ignorant than any English girl. As Jane reminds the reader an English woman is absolutely different from an Indian one: the former would not kill herself in a suttee, no matter how much in love she is with her husband (*JE*,233). Accordingly, it is by such justification of, as Bhabha's statement in "Sly Civility" asserts, "be the father and the oppressor ... just and unjust" (Bhabha, 1994, 95-6) that St. John justifies "the violence of one powerful nation writing out the history of another" (95).

St. John is presented as a spiritual character whose "mission" is to lead and civilize the ignorant ones: "He is untiring active. Great and exalted deeds are what he lives to perform. [...] His brain is first-rate [...]. St. John is an accomplished and profound scholar" (*JE*,375-6). When asked to "relinquish" his "scheme" and get married, he himself justifies this project:

Relinquish! What! my vocation? My great work? My foundation laid on earth for a mansion in heaven? My hopes of being numbered in the band who have merged all ambition in the glorious one of *bettering their race*—of carrying knowledge into the *realms of ignorance*—of substituting peace for war—freedom for bondage—religion for superstition—the hope of heaven for the fear of hell? Must I relinquish that? It is dearer than the blood in my veins. It is what I have to look forward to and to live for. (319, emphases added)

Spivak regards this imperialist project as a process of "soul-making" chosen by St. John in this novel as an alternative beyond the "mere sexual reproduction" which happens in the marriage chosen by Jane ("Three Women's Texts", 679). The point to consider is that this is the same St. John River's imperialist project which makes the marriage possible. The colonial discourse presents Rochester's legal wife as a subaltern, or in Bruce Robbin's terms: "sub-rational, on the model of the colonial primitive" (Robbins, 16), and Jane as Rochester's true partner who deserves marrying him. Thus, the Creole Bertha needs to leave the scene so that the English couple lives happily ever after. Spivak reads such process "as an allegory of the general epistemic violence of imperialism, the construction of a self-immolating colonial subject for the glorification of the social mission of the colonizer" (680). The woman from the colonies must play her role properly; she needs to transform her 'self' into 'other' and kill herself so that the English Jane become the heroine of the British novel.

St. John's mission thus is a project in line with the imperialist and colonialist schemes of nineteenth-century England: to "labour for his race" (*JE*, 385) and invite the Indian to conform to his race, adapting a life of servitude. St. John's departure is a necessity since as the colonial discourse claims European people are needed to make the 'others', the colonized civilized. If the colonizer takes the control of the colonies in his hands the colonized will gain salvation, otherwise they will be damned. The Indians as the inferior race need the great English St. John to direct them to Christianity and reform their values of paganism. As Jane, the narrator, mentions "all men of talents, whether they be men of feeling or not; whether they be *zealots*, or aspirants, or *despots* _ provided only they be sincere _have they sublime moments: when they *subdue and rule*" (*JE*,356, emphasis added); hence, the colonization is skillfully justified in the above quotation. St. John is capable of mental cruelty when his desire is thwarted.

Although Jane rejects St. John's marriage proposal, she does not reject the missionary act. She is interested in accompanying him to India as his sister. In the scene where Rochester contrasts Jane with the Turk's seraglio, claiming that for him "this one little English girl" is not comparable to "the grand Turk's whole seraglio", Jane affirms this contrast mentioning that she is not to be considered an equivalent for one of the Turks, rather she would go there as a missionary to preach liberty to them (*JE*, 229-30). In this comment she shows her Eurocentric ideas: the Eastern abused women need an English preacher to save them from the sultan's harem. The point is that whether Jane in the imperialist role of an English educator brings the Eastern people the gift of liberty or arriving in the colonies her ruling ambitions, like St. John, will arouse.

The so-called mission of civilization and liberation is presented so significantly in the novel that as Spivak notes "the important task of concluding the text" is bestowed to St. John Rivers, the missionary of the novel ("Three Women's' Texts", 679). The last page of the novel is devoted to St. John and his divine task:

As to St. John Rivers, he left England: he went to India. He entered on the path he had marked for himself; he pursues it still. A more resolute, indefatigable pioneer never wrought amidst rocks and dangers. Firm, faithful, and devoted; full of energy, and zeal, and truth, he labours for his race: he clears their painful way to improvement; [...] he anticipated his sure reward, his incorruptible crown. [...] His own words are a pledge of this:—"My Master," he says, 'has forewarned me. Daily he announces more distinctly,—"Surely I come quickly!" and hourly I more eagerly respond,—"Amen; even so come, Lord Jesus!" ' (*JE*, 385)

Although, as discussed above, the last chapter of the novel starts by Jane's recount of her marriage with Rochester and her emphasis on getting married with free will, it is St. John's voice which terminates the novel suggesting that his power does not come to close by the end of the novel or his life: the colonial project is to be continued.

England and the West Indies: Self and Other

Othering in *Jane Eyre* is not just associated with the Creole Bertha but also with the lands and the whole nation. In general, the West Indies are regarded as insane and abnormal in contrast to Europe and England in particular. Rochester recounts to Jane one night when he was awakened by Bertha's mad yells:

One night I had been awakened by her yells_[...]_it was a fiery West Indian night; one of the description that frequently precede the hurricanes of those climates [...] The air was sulphur-steams_ I could find *no refreshment anywhere*. Mosquitoes came buzzing in and hummed sullenly round the room; the sea, which I could hear form thence, rumbled *like an earthquake*_ black clouds were casting up over it; the moon was setting in the waves, broad and red, like a hot *cannon-ball*_ she threw her last bloody glance over a world quivering with the ferment of tempest. I was physically influenced by the atmosphere and scene. (*JE*, 262, emphasis added)

It seems that Rochester was influenced more mentally by the scene than physically: although, as he tells Jane, he has experienced such climate several times in Jamaica he describes the scene with too much exaggeration to the naïve Jane. Everything goes like a “hell” for him until,

A wind fresh from Europe blew over the ocean and rushed through the open casement: the storm broke, streamed, thundered, blazed, and the air grew pure. I then framed and fixed a resolution. While I walked under the dripping orange-trees of my wet garden, and amongst its drenched pomegranates and pine-apples, and while the refulgent dawn of the tropics kindled round me—I reasoned thus, Jane:—and now listen; for it was *true Wisdom* that consoled me in that hour, and showed me the right path to follow. (263, emphasis added)

Rochester claims that the Caribbean land possessed no ‘refreshment’ to offer him, yet the wind from West consoled him. He considers the wind which blew in the land of Jamaica to have come from Europe: “The sweet wind from Europe was still whispering in the refreshed leaves” (*JE*, 263), and it caused him to hear and perceive the “true Wisdom” of the imperialist West. Rochester then living in a place over which he had no knowledge and therefore no control, in order to show England as a superior and powerful land needs its other. He puts the strong hurricane of Jamaica in opposition to the ‘sweet wind’ of England to portray his own country as a place of peace and comfort. Spivak’s claim that the colonial identity is not divisible from that of the colonized others instances this circumstance (Ashcroft et al., 1995, 10). West Indies ought to be there so that the imperialist culture and country can claim their supremacy. As Helen Tiffin asserts in colonial justification the English landscape “became most normative and ideal, while the Caribbean was regarded as at best exotic, and at worst, aberrant or second-rate” (Tiffin, 200).

Surprisingly enough, this is the same wind that inspired the colonizer to imprison the colonized:

“Go,” said *Hope*, “and live again in Europe: there it is not known what a sullied name you bear, nor what a filthy burden is bound to you. You may take the maniac with you to England; confine her with due attendance and precautions at Thornfield: then travel yourself to what clime you will, and form what new tie you like [...]. That woman is not your wife; nor are you her husband.” (263, emphasis added)

In a colonial way Rochester easily and arrogantly justifies his act of confining his legal wife. He shows his action as a divine act which was revealed to him: “you have done all that God and Humanity require of you” (*JE*, 263). As Spivak asserts the “imperialism social mission” is presented “as a shift beyond the Law as divine injunction rather than human motive” (“Three Women’s Texts,” 678). This is the point where the English Rochester becomes the imperialist authority and the Caribbean Bertha the other who “loses its power to signify, to negate, to initiate its historic desire, to establish its own institutional and oppositional discourse.” (Bhabha, 1994, 45).

Using Bhabha’s terminology, in the Victorian novel of *Jane Eyre* only the pedagogical aspect of nationhood is taken into account: pedagogy tells that the nations are fixed and their identities firmly established. Performativity, on the other hand, which shows that “the nation and people

are always generating a non-identical excess over and above what we thought they were” is taken for granted (Huddart, 73). Consequently, England, and hence English, are presented as superior and healing while non-English stand in sharp opposition to them, presented as inferior and trouble-maker.

Conclusion

In “Three Women’s Texts and a Critique of Imperialism”, Spivak notes that:

It should not be possible to read nineteenth-century British literature without remembering that imperialism, understood as England’s social mission, was a crucial part of the cultural representation of England to the English. The role of literature in the production of cultural representation should not be ignored. These two obvious “facts” continue to be disregarded in the reading of nineteenth-century British literature. This itself attests to the continuing success of the imperialist project, displaced and dispersed into more modern forms. (Spivak, 2006, 675)

Accordingly, as this study endeavored to show Charlotte Bronte’s *Jane Eyre* is, the production of 19th century England is an imperialist project to make England and English prominent in contrast to the colonized people and nation. In *Jane Eyre* the British characters are depicted superior to the ‘other’ in all dimensions so that the colonial scheme will be justified. Bronte’s attempt is to prove that the colonized, as the inferior race, needs the colonizer to continue living. However, it is through reading back the novel that one realizes that there are hidden strategies and meanings in the text which all serve the Empire.

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