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Shannon O'Loughlin

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"Fire and Water Imagery" in *Jane Eyre*

Shannon O'Loughlin

Master of Arts Thesis

English Department

SUNY Cortland

Dr. Karla Alwes, Thesis Supervisor

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Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* is a study in contrasts. Critics have argued the implausibility of the novel, that an orphaned governess who marries her dashing employer is too far-fetched to be believed. However, a proper understanding of *Jane Eyre* must be based not on a sequence of events, but on the thematic form of the novel in which the signifiers relate to each other and shift throughout. Ferdinand de Saussure explains in his "Course in General Linguistics," that the mental concept one has of a word is its "signifier" (62). Charlotte Brontë relies not simply upon a sequence of events to convey understanding, but on metaphors in which hot and cold temperatures act as signifiers. These temperature metaphors indicate a realization in Jane of her power through her conscious action of speaking. This power is conveyed and contrasted within the novel through Freudian imagery which further communicates the socially accepted "proper" position of the Victorian female.

Nicola Nixon in her "*Wide Sargasso Sea* and Jean Rhys's Interrogation of the "nature wholly alien" in *Jane Eyre*," examines female stereotypes in Victorian literature. Nixon explains that in spite of the similarities between Brontë's plot structure in the novel and a fairy tale in which a damsel in distress finds her salvation with a strong man, there is more at work than a simple Cinderella story (269). She writes that "Brontë is conscious of the artificiality of this [romantic novel] structure, addressing ... directly the assumptions inherent in the romance paradigms upon which her novel is premised" (268). Nixon quotes Nancy Miller, stating that Brontë "provides a commentary on female plot itself" (Subject 208). Brontë ultimately calls the reader's attention to the inequity of a society in which a woman must marry "above her state" to gain any success in life, or at least be financially independent, something that rarely if ever happened for Victorian-era women.

Bronte uses her novel and typecast characters to weave a tale of universality. Eric Solomon states that the novel is made cohesive by symbolic pattern and imagery -- (which ultimately provide structure for) the flat secondary characters, stilted dialogue (and fanciful) love-story culminating in a governess marrying her master. I, however, would add that through Bronte's repeated use of the signifiers of fire and water, she contrasts the metaphorically hot and cold blooded characters (215). She provides the infrastructure to her novel and facilitates the consistency that is missing from her characters' romantic relationship. When Jane is described as "hot," she is essentially sure of herself, and speaks with the authority of an adult figure. However, when she is described using metaphors of "cold" or "stone-like," her authority is reduced to that of a mere child or one who is "less than."

Fire or water in some form is prevalent throughout the novel, and the hot and cold tempers battle and ultimately balance each other. Jane is represented by the imagery of fire in varying degrees at different times. The three characters with whom Jane finds herself in conflict, Aunt Reed, Pastor Brocklehurst, and St. John Rivers, will be examined in this paper through the opposite poles between Jane and the symbolically icy others, who are really slight variations of one prototype. However, this paper will also examine Jane and Mr. Rochester, as their personalities are depicted in extremes of temperature, i.e. fire and ice. This contrast between elements (and their extremes) is readily identified by the experiences of Jane, and the various settings of her adventures. Jane comes into conflict with people who would attempt to put out her fire of spirit, and she must rely upon her inner strength, her faith in God, and a sense of self preservation to endure. Jane's strength in all these various forms appears through her voice, which conveys her degrees of power in the different situations; therefore, it is important in the novel.

Janet Freeman, in her "Speech and Silence in *Jane Eyre*," writes that "In *Jane Eyre* the power of speech is supreme. It enables Jane to take more and more control of her life" (686). Jane's voice is part of her essence, and she uses it to help realize her destiny. She says, "I felt every word as acutely as if I had heard it ... and a passion ... now formed within me. *Speak* I must; I ... *must* turn. I gathered my energies and launched them" (30). Jane's voice is her weapon of justice, which she consciously wields, not out of a simple thoughtless reaction, but as a necessity for survival. The roots of her struggle lie in her negotiating a world in which women and children are considered acceptable and proper only when they subvert their voice. The strength of Jane's voice is undeniable and is akin to a spirituality; her voice is the tool by which she aligns herself with God, who is the author of justice. For Jane, her relation to spirituality (in addition to its literal meaning) is one of seeking truth. Jeffery Franklin, author of "The Merging of Spiritualities: *Jane Eyre* as Missionary of Love" cites an 1847 review by George Lewes, stating that the novel is "soul speaking to soul; it is an utterance from the depths of a struggling, suffering, much-enduring spirit" (458). The reader identifies with Jane's struggles simply because of her common thread with all of humanity. As Monika Fludernik in her essay "Narratology in the Twenty-First Century: The Cognitive Approach to Narrative" writes, "Cognitive narratology demonstrates that readers do not see texts as *having* narrative features but read texts as *narrative* by imposing cognitive narrative frames on them" (926). Put another way, readers impose cognitive narrative frames upon the texts they read. Bronte's reader identifies with Jane because everyone has at one time or another struggled to overcome inequity and injustice. Therefore, we identify with Jane because we read ourselves and our experiences into hers.

The novel can be divided into four acts and a conclusion, and Bronte incorporates the theme of survival into each. In the novel, Jane does not thrive when she does not tell her truth. In fact, survival can only come from life and flourishing. In the first act at Gateshead, Jane's duty is to survive at the oppressive hall. As the name of Gateshead implies, at this location, Jane is metaphorically looking out at the world at the start, or "head" of her journey, and it is at this juncture when she first finds her power. The aptly named home is where Jane first makes use of her voice to strike back at those who would stamp her down. Solomon writes, "In each of the four acts, the same scenes are played out: Jane comes into contact with authority, defeats it by her inner strength, and departs into exile." Throughout the novel's various settings, Jane "retains her integrity after duty defeats temptation" (215). At first, Jane's duty is to stand up for herself against her Aunt Reed. Later, in the novel's second act, at Lowood, she must learn to survive by acquiescing to Mr. Brocklehurst's cruelty, literally lowering her to less than a servant. At Thornwood, in the third act of the novel, Jane wins Mr. Rochester's love, defeating Blanche Ingram's upper class ties. She, however, exiles herself and pulls free from the tangle of symbolic thorns, as he offers a love without marriage. Though sorely tempted, Jane stands firm and leaves Rochester for an unknown future. The novel's final act takes place at the watery Marsh End. In contrast to Mr. Rochester's proposal, Jane is offered marriage without love, by St. John Rivers. She rejects Rivers and saves her dignity, along with her newfound identity as his cousin. Finally, she returns to Rochester.

The novel turns to the metaphors of fire and water because they are easily recognized as representative signifiers of human bodily temperatures and desires. As Arnold H. Modell writes in his "Some Comments on the Freudian Unconscious,"

Freud's primary process ... was characterized by what he called condensation and displacement, processes he considered to be fundamental. Condensation refers to the synthetic function of unconscious thought, where disparate ideas are combined together. Displacement refers to the transfer of one idea to another. Although he did not use the term metaphor regarding condensation, there is no question that he is referring to the function of metaphor in unconscious imagination (538).

When Rochester's passions are abated by his own literal burning, followed by a healing rain, Jane's is able to become his partner. His passions are tempered by Jane's inner strength, since she can only give herself to one who is available. At Fern Dean, the close of the novel finds Jane reunited with Rochester. While their relationship began at Thornwood, where it was doomed by Bertha, Rochester's still-living wife, it finds its full realization in the beauty and freedom of nature, when Bertha is no more. As Solomon states, the images of fire and water "are so pervasive that they serve as a substructure for the entire novel" (216). Mark Hennelly Jr. says that Jane's "poetic metaphors most often describe a pilgrim questing over land or sea, plagued by fluctuating extremes of temperature" (706). However, the novel is more than a pilgrim questing over land or sea. The structure of the novel hinges upon the various temperatures its characters embody and especially feel. Temperature is a felt, bodily passion, so Bronte is representing sexuality under the guise of spiritual love and temperature, more acceptable signifiers in Victorian society.

Bronte first introduces the contrast between fire and water when Jane is locked in the red room for fighting back against her bullying cousin, Master John. The red room is the one room in Gateshead Hall that lacks physical warmth. In this context, warmth is the symbol for heat and comfort, even though the red room's title is ironic. Yet Jane's experience within results in a

fainting fit of terror. Appropriately, her rage comes after she is released. The red room is quiet and cold, without even a fire. The solitude of the room parallels the double standard at work in the household, as Jane is treated as an interloper. In the red room, Jane's ostracism from her cousins is cruelly literal. It is the distance from her family and community which lay bare Jane's fear and prompt her to rely upon herself. Without this punishment, in which her emotions explode into both fear and subsequent anger, Jane would not develop the power of her voice. Jane's distance from her caregivers is necessary in Bronte's eyes to develop this power. It is survival of the fittest. Without her voice, Jane would remain impotent, acquiescing to the tyranny around her. Bronte writes, "This room was chill, because it seldom had a fire; it was silent because it was remote from the nursery and kitchens ..." (11). It was far away from any human activity. Sitting alone in the room where her uncle died, Jane describes herself as "cold as a stone" (13). Bronte's use of stone as a metaphor for Jane's lack of power while imprisoned is noteworthy, and is one of the first instances of fluctuating temperature imagery that is set to continue as the story progresses. Bronte mixes the metaphors of stone and cold interchangeably to convey a lack of power or voice in Jane; a stone cannot "feel" cold anymore than Jane in this scene can speak.

Jane's fit of screaming terror results in her fainting after the retreat of her aunt. "I heard her sweeping away; and soon after she was gone I suppose I had a species of fit: unconsciousness closed the scene" (14). The fire that is missing from the room erupts, following her retreat from the red room, with the metaphoric fire of Jane's emotions and her later confrontation against her aunt. Her experience of sheer panic in the red room is the catalyst that leads her to stand up against the oppressive Mrs. Reed. A change is occurring within Jane during her imprisonment and shows itself upon her release from isolation. Her anger at the unfairness



of a situation she has been thrust into as an orphan, and her giving voice to this righteous anger, releases an inner strength, or voice, that Jane is only just beginning to tap when she fights back against her cousin John. As Freeman writes,

Jane's declaration marks a necessary transformation from the child who remains silent, isolated behind the curtain with escape literature in her lap, to a child with her own story to tell to anyone who asks her, a child in possession of her own memory and able to speak (686).

Metaphorically, Jane passes over the psychological threshold of the doorway from innocence into awareness. Crossing this threshold, the doorway between innocence and awareness, is Jane moving into her adulthood. Although Freeman argues that the truth frees Jane, her internal heat - her felt bodily temperature, both emotional and physical, free her and her voice.

The difference between silence and speech mirrors the contrast in temperatures and adulthood in the novel. Freeman notes that Jane and her awareness of her own strength and power fluctuates between her speech and her listening. When she speaks, her power and passion grow; when she remains silent, or others attempt to silence her, Jane's truth (her essence) is stifled, not fully shared. Therefore, her strength is not fully realized. Freeman states:

All along, Jane has been learning to speak truly and to value true speaking. That Jane Eyre herself is one of those truth-tellers has been her destiny, her calling, from the beginning, and the word that calls her has always been her own name (697).

When Jane is locked in the red room -- cold, without fire -- she is forced into silence. In her solitude, she is powerless. However, this causes her own passionate nature to bloom in protest of her aunt's tyranny. Jane's experience in the red room is the first of many in which she learns that

"home" and "safety" represent strong emotional and interpersonal relationships rather than any physical space. As Jane later states, "Well has Soloman said, 'Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith'" (63). Although Jane's place of residence is with her aunt, she is not truly home. Love and strong emotional and interpersonal relationships in which she can speak and be heard are more important than riches. She would rather be happy in want than miserable in full because for Jane, happiness lies in her freedom of expression. If she can express herself without constraint, she is whole. Contrary to what Eric Solomaon defines as a "flat" character, Jane expressing herself freely is anything *but* flat. Her spiritual growth gives rise to her voice, in which her voice equates to sexuality. The novel is, simply put, a "Bildungsroman," or "coming of age story," in which Jane grows psychologically and morally from her youth into adulthood. Her character change is important as different aspects of her personality are highlighted in crucial scenes, the first of which results in her first confrontation with injustice.

Jane's abject terror is later surpassed by her justifiable anger. When she cries, "Oh aunt, have pity! Forgive me! I cannot endure it – let me be punished some other way! I shall be killed if..." (14) her voice is still that of a child; it is insufficient to melt her aunt's icy exterior and demeanor. In fact, Jane's protests solidify her aunt's belief in her dangerous and rebellious nature. Jane explains her aunt viewing her as one would a dangerous imp: "She sincerely looked on me as a compound of virulent passions, mean spirit, and dangerous duplicity" (14). This "compound" of Jane's "passions," "spirit," and the "duplicity" that her aunt are so repulsed by are none other than the qualities which were threatening and unfavorable in women of Victorian society. Passions of any nature, including sexual, were never to be shown. Equally so, women of good standing were to be silent, and remain in the background. They must use their

voices as little as possible in order to remain pleasing to society at large. Bronte is fully aware of employing a protagonist who flaunts these very things. Jane, who is not content to keep her voice to herself, even vocalizes to her aunt that her cousins are "...not fit to associate with me" (22). Her final victorious confrontation with her aunt is the fruition of Jane's power, and her self-awareness of that power. Jane turns the tables by threatening to expose the truth about her aunt's nature, and Jane's vocalization of her interior psyche gives her the upper hand in their power struggle. The ire Jane feels after her terrible experience and her subsequent actions show the reader her inner shift from relying on others for help to self-reliance, and a consciousness of her own strength.

Following her release, rather than letting herself be destroyed by the experience, or ostracized into further solitude, Jane steels her resolve and becomes self-reliant. In terms of metaphors within the novel, Jane's strength completes itself through her growing voice, and her time of transition into womanhood. Jane using her voice to overcome or defeat the silence enforced upon her by her aunt [and later Rochester and St. John Rivers] shows the contrasting elements between her passion and the authoritarian characters she comes into conflict with. She even threatens her aunt, as one adult to another, stating:

I will never come to see you when I am grown up; and if anyone asks me how I liked you, and how you treated me, I will say the very thought of you makes me sick, and that you treated me with miserable cruelty . . . I will tell anybody who asks me questions this exact tale ... I'll let everybody at Lowood know what you are, and what you have done (31).

Bronte deliberately incorporates Jane's threat of involving a third party. When she threatens to involve an outside source, she effectively silences the voice of her aunt. Jane embodies the metaphoric strength of her womanhood and thus extricates herself from the burden of servitude.

Jane's description of her aunt speaking to her as one adult would to another – as equals – rather than an adult to a child, clearly conveys her aunt's awareness of this new shift in their dynamic. Jane describes her Aunt Reed's response, which clearly conveys her aunt's awareness of Jane's usurpation of power. “‘What more have you to say?’ she asked, rather in the tone . . . a person might address an opponent of adult age than such is ordinarily used to a child” (30). Jane is beginning to appreciate her influence, but as a young girl, she is not fully comfortable with it. She thinks: “Willingly would I now have gone and asked Mrs. Reed's pardon; but I knew, partly from experience and partly from instinct, that was the way to make her repulse me with double scorn, thereby re-exciting every turbulent impulse of my nature” (31). Although acclimating to her new status as an equal to Mrs. Reed, Jane sees that there is no going back. Like Caesar, she has metaphorically crossed the Rubicon. Jane's newly audible voice allows her to actualize her power and thus exert a modicum of control over her destiny. “Jane's powerful passion defeats the outside force of Aunt Reed's brutality” (Solomon 215). She actually uses the image of fire to describe herself after her encounter with her aunt. “I was left there alone, winner of the field . . . A ridge of lighted heath, alive, glancing, devouring, would have been a meet emblem of my mind when I accused and menaced Mrs. Reed (31). Jane knows she is on her own. Her fervor and independence subsequently carry her throughout the rest of the novel. Bronte uses the fire versus water imagery to signify Jane's triumph. Even here, Bronte is consciously incorporating temperature metaphors. Passion is inextricably linked with authority. Jane's mind, described as a lighted heath, is awakening to her womanhood, albeit a

socially acceptable Christian version where women are subject to the whims of their superiors. In her escape from Gateshead, Jane ironically loses her family ties that should have protected her. She gains her freedom, but loses her place in the world.

The second section of the novel takes place at Lowood boarding school, where again, Jane is in conflict with an oppressive, tyrannical caretaker. Arnold Shapiro's "In Defense of *Jane Eyre*" notes the similarities between Jane's aunt and the pastor. He writes, "Charlotte Bronte makes evident the close bond between Mrs. Reed and Brocklehurst, the upholders of the social order, of things as they are, and the enemies of freedom and openness" (685). I agree with Shapiro in that Mrs. Reed and Brocklehurst are enemies of freedom, but not in the sense Shapiro refers to. In addition to stifling freedom, Brocklehurst attempts to stifle female sexuality. He even requires that the hair of the students be cut off to curb their physical appeal.

Why has she, or any other, curled hair?... My mission is to mortify in these girls the lusts of the flesh; to teach them to clothe themselves with shamefacedness and sobriety, not with braided hair and costly apparel; and each of the young persons before us has a string of hair twisted in plaits which ... must be cut off (54).

Bronte again uses Brocklehurst to illuminate the plight of the voiceless. None of the students may protest or escape his wrath, and therefore, the reader hates him.

Although a pastor, Brocklehurst, like Mrs. Reed, embodies ice through his coldness of heart. He is "impervious to human feelings, closed to human appeal." In Jane's eyes he is a 'black pillar' – a 'stony stranger' (34). This is another instance where Bronte uses stone as a metaphor for bodily temperature. Bronte's overt use of a later Freudian metaphor for male sexuality through the pastor's description as a "stony stranger" establishes a connection between "strangeness" and "male-ness" - integral cogs in the machine of male-dominated

society. Brocklehurst is the male power which would silence any opposition, especially Jane's. His description as a pillar only furthers Bronte's overt use of phallic imagery. Shapiro notes, "Mr. Brocklehurst's hardness predominates, and is, in fact, contagious" (687). The coldness of Brocklehurst is his power to silence Jane, akin to the cold in the red room which threatened to creep into Jane's bones. It is insidious. Therefore, Bronte makes a calculated appeal to her readers to note the ease with which a man is able to suppress through gender and authority, those beneath him, which encompasses both women and children. As one who would suppress individuality, Brocklehurst actively attempts to silence Jane and any who would oppose him. He dresses the students in the poorest material and ensures only the most meager meals. In keeping with his appearance, his personality is devoid of human warmth.

Through Brocklehurst's actions towards Jane (and the other pupils), Bronte is actually contrasting the way religion is often interpreted with how it should be. She consciously calls the reader's attention to the intentions behind religious law and the discrepancies in practice. This is yet another example of how Jane, who represents truth, is in conflict with duplicitous people. On the outside, Aunt Reed cared for an orphan, but behind closed doors, she was cruel to Jane. The pastor is the same. The discrepancy between Brocklehurst's behavior as a man of the cloth and the reality of his interactions with pupils and soft-hearted staff at Lowood is used by Bronte to illuminate the difference between following the letter of the law and adhering to the spirit of the law. True Christians would treat others the way they themselves would want to be treated. Brocklehurst and his minions merely serve as oppressors. To them, the students are bereft of identity and humanity. In fact, the students at Lowood are little more than slaves. They have no real voice, as does Jane. Freeman states, "The inmates of Lowood Institution are known first by the "hum of their many voices"; their "whispered repetitions" (36) of the next day's

lessons symbolize their bondage (692). The students are Brocklehurst's charge, but he abuses his power.

Brocklehurst is used as an example of one who follows the letter of the law, but ignores its spirit. His personality mirrors the school itself —charitable in purpose, but cruel in reality. We witness this discrepancy clearly in the first days of Jane's residency at Lowood. Her first afternoon at the school, the pupils are sent into the cold winter garden, and Jane is confronted by a plaque that reads 'Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven'- St. Matt. v.16.' Jane is puzzled by the message because of the discrepancy between what she reads, and what she has seen of Lowood, and its benefactor. We can see the way Bronte feels, because at the end of the novel it is a very different religion that Jane (and later Mr. Rochester) adhere to than what initially greets the reader. Jane's religion is to remain true to her God-given morals, including her individuality. Her voice, her metaphoric flame of character, is sometimes muffled, but never actually stifled, even at Lowood. In fact, later in the novel, her voice is what Rochester recognizes and craves hearing.

After Gateshead, Jane is well-prepared for her encounters with the hard-hearted Brocklehurst. In keeping with his coldness of personality, Brocklehurst tries to overpower the beneficent Miss Temple, Jane's would-be protector. His effect on Miss Temple is to reduce her persona to that of a child's. Eagerly, he attempts to engage her in a confrontation, which Miss Temple sidesteps. She refuses to even acknowledge his pettiness. Of their confrontation regarding the pupils at Lowood, Bronte writes,

Miss Temple had looked down when he first began to speak to her; but she now gazed straight before her, and her face, naturally pale as marble, appeared to be assuming also the coldness and fixity of that material; especially her mouth, closed as if it would have

required a sculptor's chisel to open it, and her brow settled gradually into petrified severity (53).

In blocking Brocklehurst, Miss Temple's features take on his own frozen aspect. She is powerless, a lesson which is not lost on Jane. Jane sees that Miss Temple does the only thing she can in the situation, which is appear to become nothing. However, "nothing," in this case, demands great strength. Because it is too dangerous to attempt to thwart Brocklehurst openly, Jane learns survival from a fellow pupil, Helen Burns, whose only indication of "fire," it would seem, comes from her last name. Helen's nature is not passionate; but hers is a patient nature. As her last name indicates, she's only metaphorically smouldering, and she burns patiently, over time.

Burns is a martyr who is metaphorically "burned at the stake" with her constant punishments for trivial matters. As the patient sufferer (she even dies of consumption), - Burns tells Jane, "It is far better to endure patiently a smart which nobody feels but yourself, than to commit a hasty action whose evil consequences will extend to all connected with you" (47). The contrast between shared pain and isolated pain is not lost on the reader. Helen's philosophy is to literally "turn the other cheek" (Matthew 5:39) and suffer silently. Her authority comes more from her martyrdom. Even when she is punished by Miss Scatcherd for her unclean nails, and her neck is whipped, Helen refuses to complain. While Jane watches the scene in anger and amazement, Helen quietly submits.

The teacher instantly and sharply inflicted on her neck a dozen strokes with the bunch of twigs. Not a tear rose to Burns' eye; and, while I paused from my sewing, because my fingers quivered at this spectacle with a sentiment of unavailing and impotent anger, not a feature of her pensive face altered its ordinary expression" (45).



Although Helen is a victim of Brocklehurst, through his minion Miss Scatcherd, Jane cannot and does not accept Burns' doctrine of saintly suffering. She does, however, admit, "I felt that Helen Burns considered things by a light invisible to my eyes. I suspected she might be right and I wrong; but I would not ponder the matter deeply..." (47). The description of Helen's eyes as containing "light" - (reminiscent of a small, sputtering flame) - confirms her as something of a kindred spirit to Jane. Helen is one who is purified through the fire of suffering - (like Rochester will be) - however, she lacks Jane's spirit. Helen is more the traditional church saint, who offers everything up to God, and in so doing, is purified through the flames of her pain, as an ideological martyr would be. Jane even admits that she sees something immortal in Helen - she's more than human.

Helen ... smiled at me as she went by. I know that it was the effluence of fine intellect, of true courage; it lit up her marked lineaments, her thin face, her sunken grey eye, like a reflection of the aspect of an angel (57).

Jane's witness of Helen's suffering and Miss Temple's inability to effect change is key to her own survival at Lowood, because it is from their experiences that she acquires tools to withstand Brocklehurst's cruelty. Bronte's inclusion of Jane's time at Lowood serves to underscore the difficulty in remaining true to oneself, especially when those in authority attempt to obliterate individuality and silence the voice of anyone who would protest or rebel. Anyone who stands up to the authority are challenging the social and religious order; therefore, they are traitors. As the reader, we are able to read our own experience into the narrative - we bring something of ourselves to the tale.

Jane bears her punishment of public humiliation with stoicism and the help of the Lowood students, to attain the next chapter of her existence. She appears to give in, but she is

“trying to cope with a world she sees as completely hostile” (Shapiro 688). As her punishment of standing aloft for half an hour in full view of the student body is decreed, Brocklehurst is described once more in cold, stone-like terms. He is “the black marble clergyman” (56). Far from gentle and compassionate, as one would expect a holy man to be, Brocklehurst is the opposite of love. Although Jane has previously vowed to fight back against oppressors, the public humiliation is almost too much to bear. Luckily, with help from her peers, the power of her self-control tempers her own burning passions. On the verge of hysteria, Jane gains strength and regains her composure, metaphorically defeating the frigid Mr. Brocklehurst with the light of warmth and love from the other pupils’ eyes.

Jane gains strength from the eyes of her fellow peers, especially Helen Burns.

A girl came up and passed me: in passing, she lifted her eyes. What a strange light inspired them! What an extraordinary sensation that ray sent through me! It was as if a martyr, a hero, had passed a slave or victim, and imparted strength in the transit. I ... took a firm stand on the stool (57).

The light emoting from Helen's eyes is the symbol of potency and truth. While not actual fire, it is enough to give Jane strength to continue, and contributes to her waning spirit. Jane is subject to the plays of her emotions, but even when she must avail herself of outside moral support, her true heroism and vigor lie in her ability to master her passions. In submission to Brocklehurst, Jane bears her punishment and maintains her self worth, thus enduring his tyranny but saving herself in the process. "I mastered the rising hysteria ... I now ventured to descend ... I retired into a corner and sat down on the floor" (57). She refuses to provide any further fodder for his mania. Her inner fire is not put out by the ice of his cruelty, and Jane maintains her authority,

albeit with the moral support of the other pupils. Jane's success as a graduate of Lowood conveys hope and the chance for a better future to any reader in a similar situation.

As previously noted, Bronte uses Jane to "castigate Brocklehurst's false religion" (Shapiro 687). Her ability to withstand his cruelty after her punishment and illuminate a hypocritical interpretation of religion is proved over time when many of the pupils at Lowood die of typhus. The oppressive atmosphere of Lowood which conveys consumption to the students is a clear indication of the "sick" religion the authority figures adhere to and embrace. Even the name "Lowood" is reminiscent of poor health, bringing to mind a swampy, mosquito-infested marsh, which breeds infection, disease, and sickness. Contrary to Fern Dean, at the close of the novel, Lowood is the epitome of the ugliness of nature when man corrupts it with his ugly morals. In his article regarding medical geography in *Jane Eyre*, Alan Bewell notes that Bronte "does not consider weather [of a specific region] as strictly a physical phenomenon, but as an expressive of social and moral relationships" (789). That said, if the majority of students are infected at Lowood, that is indicative of an infected moral character which permeates the administrators of the school. In keeping with this line of thought, characters who are either metaphorically too hot blooded or too cold blooded are "sick." In order to be healed, they must reach some sort of inner balance of temperature, thus reflected in their beings. Jane, unscathed, is a symbol of truth and temperance which triumphs over adversity.

Bewell adds that "political values and positions underlay representations" and claims that Bronte is "asking us to read the physical surroundings of Lowood in the same way as doctors were being taught to read it as a disease landscape ... the quality of a country is embodied in the health of its people" (774), especially its poorest people. I agree with this assessment, especially

concerning morality. The poor are often an indicator of the moral state of the society in which they live. A country is only as healthy as its sickest inhabitants, so if citizens at the lower end of the socio-economic spectrum are well, the country is well. If they are ill, the country is ill. This extends from physical wellness to spiritual wellness, too. While elevating Jane, Brocklehurst's behavior during the typhus outbreak, and the subsequent public outrage at both him and the school's conditions are "mortifying to Mr. Brocklehurst, but beneficial to the institution" (70) and serve to underscore that good and fire (in this case, morality) triumph over ice and immorality. Ever conscious of her desire for independence, and in order to thrive, Jane removes herself, leaving Lowood to work at Thornfield Manor.

It is here at Thornfield Manor that Jane must free herself from the catches (or thorns) of Mr. Rochester's too-hot passion. Where before, Jane's anger signified her voice as an adult, at Thornfield, Mr. Rochester's heat of character threatens to seduce her; because of this, Jane's voice is lessened, and her authority is, too. As one who is already married, Rochester is a tempting rose whose dark, good looks will entice Jane, but whose thorns that tear into her emotions only wound her because he is already taken. He is unavailable until after a fire demolishes his looks, his home, his wife, and any ties she would have over him. The section of the novel that details Jane's relationship as a governess with her master, Mr. Rochester, contains some of the strongest fire and water imagery.

The fire is in Jane's spirit and in Rochester's eyes. The fiery passion of Jane, and, later, Rochester, must be quenched by the cold waters of self-control – but not destroyed by the ice of repression. If their bodies burn, their minds must dampen the fires (Solomon 216). Because Rochester and Jane embody a sort of "everyman," Bronte's use of them as stereotypical Victorian archetypes conveys Oscar Wilde's later famous lesson to his readers, "Everything in

moderation including moderation.” Jane and Rochester each temper the other, allowing their love to eventually blossom. They are neither consumed nor drowned by emotions, but when they initially meet, each is still imperfect. The power of self reliance Jane realized as a young child is forever imprinted on her, and she cannot give it up for any man. She is a person who strives to truly adhere to a moral code and refuses to forsake her faith in God, or the diction of her conscience. To do so would be her undoing.

After first meeting her, when Rochester has Jane into his study for tea, he is described to the reader as residing in and around a warm fire, which seems to envelop him. His fire of nature is compelling – even seductive. “Two wax candles stood lighted on the table, and two on the mantelpiece; basking in the light and heat of a superb fire ... reclined on a couch appeared Mr. Rochester ... the fire shone full on his face”(102). Rochester is continuously described as illuminated by fire or light; in fact, he even instructs Jane to “come to the fire” (103). Bronte writes “In the dining room: the luster, which had been lit for dinner, filled the room with a festal breadth of light; the large fire was all red and clear...” (111). The fire in the Thornfield dining room is the complete opposite of Jane’s childhood experience in the red room at Gateshead. This time, her emotions need not provide the light and heat for the room; they are physically and psychologically present in the fire and in Mr. Rochester’s being. The Freudian description of fire in Rochester's body is furthered when he even tells Jane that she will "suit him" (113) and the reader is left to wonder if he isn't toying with the thought of a sexual encounter. Jane states, “There was a smile on his lips, and his eyes sparkled” (111). In fact, the most notable aspects of Mr. Rochester are his eyes. Even when he is enigmatically speaking to Jane of why he abhors Thornfield, Rochester’s eyes are the most prominent in his description.

Lifting his eye to the battlements, he cast over them a glare such as I never saw before or since. Pain, shame, ire – impatience, disgust, detestation – seemed . . . to hold a quivering conflict in the large pupil dilating under his ebon eyebrow . . . it settled his passion (122).

No matter what emotion he experiences, Rochester is described as intense; he is characterized as fiery through his description. He is dark skinned, he is constantly mentioned as surrounding himself with fire, Jane saves him from fire, and he is later even physically maimed by fire. Jane never sees his eyes look that way again because after she saves him, the balance of their equilibrium is shaken. At this point in the novel, he is consumed by his emotions like the tree in the orchard which is split in half by lightning.

Jane appears more temperate than he is, but she is irrevocably drawn to him. She answers him as an equal in spite of her title; her authority is strengthened with the purity of her emotions - her inner heat. She has already admitted that Rochester's ease of manner has pulled her to him, and that she feels he is more of a relation to her than mere master (125). Jane is simply better able to manage her emotions and their sway over her. She says of Rochester that "his presence in a room was more cheering than the brightest fire" (125). Jane's growing connection with Rochester is significant because she has longed for companionship since she was a child. Still, she is not willing to compromise her principles.

In the first scene where the true feelings Rochester harbors for Jane become visible, she accidentally awakens and saves his life. Summoned out of sleep by the eerie laughter of Rochester's hidden wife, Bertha, Jane finds him engulfed in flames. Nixon alerts the reader to the contrasts between depraved sexuality and acceptable Victorian women. She writes,

Bertha's congenital madness is transmitted through the female line: she is "the true daughter of an infamous mother" (261). This specifically female madness is ... associated with an aberrant sexuality: Bertha is immodest, impure, unchaste, and depraved ... Rochester's narrative reveals the true Victorian Englishman's encoding of female sexuality and passion - read "madness" -- as the negative polarity to a natural chastity and refinement (272).

Bertha is the obstacle for Jane and Rochester's union, lighting a fire in their marriage bed and tearing Jane's wedding veil. When Bertha sets his bed on fire, a sexual act in of itself, (symbolizing Rochester's state of being – he is subject completely to his passions) - it is Jane, the "Victorian encoding" of proper sexuality and passion, who comes to his rescue by “deluging the bed and its occupant . . . and extinguishing the flames which were devouring it” (127). This physical act symbolizes Jane's act as Rochester's savior.

When she first meets him, Rochester literally leans on her – from day one, Jane is Rochester's support. From an emotional standpoint, she is also in control. Unlike Rochester, Jane's strength of spirit, not merely her emotions, is what governs her. While she craves a connection with him, Jane maintains the boundary between Rochester and herself. Ironically, where Jane has previously used her power of speech to seize control of her destiny, the silence she employs is almost as strong. Freeman states,

When Jane puts out the mysterious fire in Rochester's bedroom her capacity for silence assists her master and binds her to him fully as much as the water she throws on him. 'You are no talking fool : say nothing about it (694).

Bronte's message is clear: passion, unchecked, leads to ruin. The dangers of unchecked female passions (symbolized by the foreign and dark Mrs. Rochester) are presented as deadly. Bronte

portrays her as a woman unable to keep her passions in check, and that is what causes her to go mad. Bertha serves as a foil for Jane, and in the larger sense, Brontë's idea of genteel English femininity. Incidentally, Brontë also notes that Rochester is dark complected - a fact not lost on the reader. Both Rochester and his hidden wife serve to remind and warn us that unchecked bodily passions and hedonism go hand in hand. Conversely, Jane's inner fire is one that is ultimately self-policing. Bertha represents a figure who is animalistic in her passions, consumed by them to such a degree that she literally loses herself in syphilitic insanity. Nixon writes,

Bertha's monstrousness is both accentuated and confirmed by her foreignness. A white Creole from Jamaica, she is implicitly alien to English nature and culture, an alarming mix of sexuality and savagery, of unnatural sexual "propensities" and alien primitivism (267).

We are lead, then, to believe that Rochester can and must be punished for his poor choice in a mate. Nixon adds,

Characterized as mad and savage, as herself an affront to the "natural" laws of progressive civilization and acculturation so dear to the Victorians, Bertha signifies what Nancy Armstrong calls an "aberrant form [] of desire" (184) - a desire that displays itself as a physical, and thus debased, sexualized passion rather than a mental, and thus enlightened, chastely, spiritual love - and her visibility in the text can therefore highlight by contrast the discrete parameters of legitimate desire (268).

Bertha is fully directed by her bodily desires. Upon first seeing her after the revelation that she is Rochester's wife, Jane does not even describe Bertha as human. She states,

A figure ran backwards and forwards. What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first tell: it grovelled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like



some strange wild animal: but it was covered in clothing, and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its head and face (250).

Jane later describes Bertha as a “clothed hyena” (250). Bertha’s loss of self is indicated by both her unrestrained passions, and her animalistic silence. Unlike Jane, she cannot speak up for herself, and her sole means of expressing herself is by means of animal growls and violent acts. Her silence is the end result of the hedonistic and self-indulgent actions of her youth. It is the balance in Jane’s character that appeals to Rochester most, the presence of passion constrained by the cooling influence of reason. We see this in each of the episodes where Jane’s calmness and judgement stand in stark relief against Bertha’s insanity. When Jane rescues Rochester from the fire that his wife has set, Rochester is drawn to her more than ever before- she saves his life, but more importantly; her calmness, reason, and sense of self offer a hope of salvation for Rochester’s soul. Her nature, but more importantly, her calmness, is a balm to his own wounded psyche.

After extinguishing the fire set by his mad wife around Rochester’s bed, Jane describes herself awaiting his return as “cold, in spite of the cloak” (128). Additionally, when she leaves Rochester for the night, the contrast between his fire and her respective coolness are noticeable. “Strange energy was in his voice, strange fire in his look.

‘I am glad I happened to be awake,’ I said; and then I was going.

‘What! You will go?’

‘I am cold, sir’

‘Cold? Yes, - and standing in a pool! Go, then, Jane; go!’ But he still retained my hand, and I could not free it (129).

According to Jane, the fire in Rochester's voice is "strange." At this point, however, Rochester has not been purified through his injuries by fire, so like Bertha (although not to the same degree), he is susceptible to his passions. It is noteworthy that after almost burning to death, Rochester has "fire" in his eyes and voice. The aspect of this scene which is remarkable is that he does not let go of Jane's hand. He is physically claiming her, restraining her for his own. At this point, though, Jane is not ready to acknowledge her growing feelings for Rochester, nor give herself over to be his. It is for these reasons that she feels the energy and fire emanating from him are "strange." As a governess in his employ, Jane is not on equal terms with Rochester to pursue a relationship, and she has too much self respect to cross that boundary.

His description of her as "cold" occurs later, when (once again) he appears beside a fire, this time disguised as a gypsy. "She was bending over the fire ... reading...by the light of the blaze" (167). He tells her, "You are cold, because you are alone: no contact strikes the fire from you that is in you" (168). Although Rochester wants her as his own, Jane knows too well the danger in becoming another one of his mistresses. As a student of human nature, and one acquainted with Rochester's character, she knows him better than he knows himself. She knows how he feels about his past conquests, and she refuses to be seen in any light other than that of equality. Jane is fully aware that if she and Rochester are anything other than equals, he will never respect her. Once the excitement of the moment passes, he will become disillusioned with her. Even when Rochester is dressed as the gypsy, Jane tells him, "Don't keep me long; the fire scorches me" (171). Clearly, she is aware of the disparity in their roles. Bronte purposely reinforces the importance of equality because, without it, the novel's symbolic theme is lost. Fire and water must remain separate, and not quench each other. An unbalanced union, like too much fire or water, will run its course, ending prematurely. Not until they declare their

love for each other as equals does Jane agree to a relationship and marriage, and not until they are truly equals, free to be together, do Jane and Rochester ultimately unite.

In the orchard, Jane finally reveals her true passion for Rochester, declaring her dread of being separated from him at what she believes to be his upcoming marriage to Blanche Ingram. When considering that she will likely be in Ireland, her tears give away her feelings of being torn from Rochester. "It is a long way off, sir. Not the voyage, but the distance: and the sea is a barrier – from *you* sir" (214). Later, she adds, "I am not talking to you now through the medium of custom, conventionalities, nor even of mortal flesh –it is my spirit that addresses your spirit; just as if both had passed through the grave, and we stood at God's feet, equal, - as we are" (216). Jane's honesty (and Rochester's revelation that he will not marry Blanche) relieves her heartache, and in a parallel to her previous description of Rochester, he describes her in much the same terms. "You – you strange – you almost unearthly thing! - I love as my own flesh. You - . . . I entreat to accept me as a husband" (216). In a cruel twist of fate, Jane and Rochester cannot be equals, as his hidden marriage to a madwoman comes to light. This irony makes Jane's declaration all the more emotionally sorrowful – she speaks as an equal to one that is already taken.

Tragically, the revelation of Bertha's existence pushes Jane away from Thornfield and Rochester, because as long as Bertha lives, Jane and he can never marry. Jane states, "Sir, your wife is living: that is a fact acknowledged by yourself. If I lived with you as you desire, I should then be your mistress" (259). Jane's force of character and her self respect compel her to vacate Thornfield. Although rent to the core, she denies her feelings to save herself. It is here that the cooling waters of reason temper Jane's passions of the heart. In an ironic twist, Rochester's

dissection of Jane's character when he speaks to her as the gypsy woman, is revealed to be true.

He had told her,

The forehead declares, 'Reason sits firm and holds the reins, and she will not let the feelings burst away and hurry her to wild chasms. The passions may rage furiously, like true heathens, as they are; and the desires may imagine all sorts of vain things; but judgement shall still have the last word in every argument, and the casting vote in every decision (171).

The passions of love and lust are portrayed here as a sort of inferno, but unlike Bertha, Jane is not consumed by the conflagration; she does not lose herself, or the quiet type of English femininity that is set in stark relief to the colonialistic portrayal of Bertha. After she learns Rochester is taken, the imagery of quelling water is undeniable. "It came: in full, heavy swing the torrent poured over me . . . the waters came into my soul; I sank in deep mire: I felt no standing; I came into deep waters; the floods overflowed me"(253). The symbolic imagery here is reminiscent of the Biblical flood. Like the flood sent by God to cleanse the earth, the symbolic waters that engulf Jane, submerging her during her time of grief, purify her soul. She is freed from the hold of her feelings for Rochester through emotional catharsis, water imagery, and the terrible knowledge of Bertha's existence.

Jane knows she must leave Rochester. Again, her voice guides her, although it comes in the form of a subconscious command. "A voice within me averred . . . you shall tear yourself away . . ." (254). She takes charge, commanding her destiny, saving her soul and Rochester's in the process. Jane says, "I felt an inward power; a sense of influence, which supported me" (259). Jane's pushback against being "kept" moves her along, out of Thornfield, and on to Marsh End. Pointedly, when the water imagery seems to drown her sorrows, Jane finds her

salvation in the end of a marsh, in which she had metaphorically submerged herself. Her baptism by desire for "the right" leads her to the final act of the novel.

Ultimately, Marsh End is the location where Jane's fortitude is tried the most. Yet, Bronte's theme of self reliance through the power of the spoken word emerges here, too. While Rochester offers Jane love without marriage, St. John Rivers offers Jane marriage without love. Water, as referenced by his last name, is part of his very being. Unfortunately, St. John is metaphorically too cold-blooded to be compatible in any way with Jane. He embodies the icy waters that would destroy passion in her— he has ice kisses, and he is described as cold, marble-like – even glacial. Jane says, "I found myself under the influence of the ever watchful blue eye . . . so keen . . . and yet so cold" (338). Like her aunt and Brocklehurst, here too, Jane comes into conflict with authority. Bronte consciously uses another misconstrued interpretation of religion to illuminate the discrepancies between right and wrong. This time, Jane must navigate the confines of an imposed religion - once again imposed by her caretakers. As before, Jane relies upon her voice and her faith in God to help her resist the cold life of religious servitude that St. John represents. Unhappy with her natural state, St. John wants Jane to alter and stifle her personality to suit his tastes. Rather than cruelty, St. John uses the authority of religion to attempt to stifle Jane and silence her God-given voice. Unlike Brocklehurst, St. John is not cruel; still, he uses the letter of the law and fails to comprehend or accept its spirit. Jane relates that, "vivacity (at least in me) was distasteful to him" and adds, "I fell under a freezing spell" (339). St. John is metaphorically freezing Jane to death by extinguishing the fire of her spirit. When he offers Jane his hand in marriage, it is in reality, not an offer, but more a demand that she enter into marriage with him, on his terms. St. John does not offer Jane love or understanding, instead, he scorns those soft feelings as being superfluous- it is duty and not love

that compels him. Hypocritically, however, he ignores the romantic feelings he harbors for Rosamund Oliver. Bronte writes,

I saw a glow rise to that master's face. I saw his solemn eye melt with sudden fire, and flicker with resistless emotion. Flushed and kindled thus, he looked nearly as beautiful for a man as she for a woman. His chest heaved once, as if his large heart, weary of despotic constriction, had expanded, despite the will, and made a vigorous bound for the attainment of liberty. But he curbed it, I think, as a resolute rider would curb a rearing steed (311).

Rivers proposes marriage with Jane in lieu of his own personal happiness with Rosamund, since he would be doing what he perceives to be God's work, preaching the gospel in India. For Jane, such a marriage would be tantamount to ruin. She knows he has no feelings for her. She thinks, “. . . he asks me to be his wife, and has no more of a husband's heart for me than that . . . giant of a rock, down which the stream is foaming . . .” (345). Again, St. John is compared to something without warmth. In keeping with the theme of her novel, Bronte draws Rivers as cold and icy to show what Jane must avoid if she is to thrive. Similar to Brocklehurst's description, he is even characterized as a column, adding to his hardness of nature. Although Jane agrees to be with him to assist in his ministry, she refuses to go with him as his wife. She says, “. . . as his wife . . . forced to keep the fire of my nature continually low, to compel it to burn inwardly and never utter a cry . . . *this* would be unendurable” (347). Jane actually tells him – “If I were to marry you, you would kill me. You are killing me now!”(351) Jane's self respect supports and is reinforced by her moral character. She values her life enough to protect it, not throw it away. In ending her verbal rebuff of St. John, she says, “God did not give me my life to throw away; and to do as you wish me would, I begin to think, be almost equivalent to

committing suicide” (352). By clinging to her morals and staying true to herself, Jane uses a combination of self control, coupled with her faith in God to reject St. John Rivers’ offer of a hollow sham of a marriage. Tellingly, Jane is almost overcome by St. John’s icy fervor. When he speaks with Jane for the second time, urging her to marry him and come with him on the missionary trip, she states, “I contended with my inward dimness of vision, before which clouds yet rolled. I sincerely, deeply, fervently longed to do what was right; and only that”(357). With no barrier of wrongdoing to spur her choice, Jane is almost overcome, and is in thrall to St. John’s will. In this state of confusion, she is recalled to herself not by an inner directive, but an external presence that speaks to her in Rochester’s voice. This voice, a desolate cry that Jane alone hears, says her name three times and then is silent. But this cry is enough- Rochester’s voice has the power to restore Jane to that better version of herself that embraces both love and duty. Jane describes how after she hears Rochester’s voice, she is animated, and able to speak for herself. Jane states, “I broke from St. John...It was *my* time to assume ascendancy. *My* powers were in play and in force.” (358). Before, Jane acted as Rochester’s savior, dousing him with water, but now, it is this reminder of the fire in her nature, a reminder that love and duty can coexist, that propels her out of Rivers’ watery mire. As in Thornfield, Jane leaves Marsh End and saves her dignity, stating, “I should still have my unblighted self to turn to” (347). In this penultimate scene of the novel, Freeman adds, "Readers of Jane Eyre also understand, once the novel is nearing its end, that Jane's true history is her own property and that no one else has the right to tell it" (683).

In her return to Thornfield and Rochester, she finds each burnt and ruined. Bertha, dead by her own hand, has physically and psychologically disfigured Rochester in the last fire she ever sets. Though broken, Rochester is not destroyed, and without the impediment of his wife,

he and Jane are free to marry. Paradoxically, the fire which maims him is also the fire which destroys the obstacle to his and Jane's romance. He is damaged, but Rochester is still metaphorically hot blooded. His fire of spirit is diminished, but not destroyed. The fire which maimed him has also purified him with its imposed suffering. His once too fiery nature is now tempered. He still surrounds himself with fire, but it is significantly smaller, a reflection of his altered state. Rochester's servant tells Jane, "He always has candles brought in at dark, though he is blind", and Jane states that in the parlor, "a neglected handful of fire burnt low in the grate" (368). Clearly, this symbolizes the fire which still burns within him, waiting to be rekindled by Jane.

In contrast to her relationship with Rivers, with Rochester, Jane's spirits are invigorated. Whereas life with Rivers would have killed her, stifling her spirit, Jane once again blossoms in the warmth of Rochester's presence. She tells Rochester, "I am not cold like a corpse, nor vacant like air . . ." (369). Similarly, Rochester tells Jane that her voice "cheers my withered heart; it puts life into it" (370). The tragedy of the fire has actually bridged their once insurmountable division. Bertha is gone, and Rochester's injuries render him dependant upon others. He can no longer be subject to his whims and desires. His nature, once too hot, is now amenable to Jane's. As his future wife, she compares her influence upon Rochester to that of one lighting a darkened lamp. "His countenance reminded one of a lamp, waiting to be relit" (374). Bereft with grief, separated from Jane's presence, Rochester's inner fire guttered, and has all but died. With Jane's return, though, Rochester shines. She writes, "I had wakened the glow; his features beamed" (374). Finally, they are together, as equals.

Bronte's final commentary on religion and morals is clearly expressed through Rochester's declarations to a beneficent God before he and Jane are wed. He exclaims,



Jane! You think me, I daresay, an irreligious dog; but my heart swells with gratitude to the beneficent God of this earth just now . . . I did wrong . . . I would have sullied my innocent flower . . . I thank my Maker that in the midst of judgment He has remembered mercy. I humbly entreat my Redeemer to give me strength to lead henceforth a purer life than I have done hitherto! (380)

The imagery of their final union and marriage brings the novel to a close. In an unadorned, unapologetically joyful sentence, Jane says, simply, "Reader, I married him" (382). Finally, she and Rochester are united in a marriage of true love.

Bette London, in her "The Pleasures of Submission : *Jane Eyre* and the Production of the Text" points out the inequities in their marital situation - Rochester and Jane marry only after he is crippled, maimed, and blinded. London writes that the novel "represents as much a study in subjection as in subjecthood" (199), Jane's courage and her strength of character are crowned with the ultimate happiness; her faith in God and herself is rewarded. *Jane Eyre* is not simply an exercise in which Bronte positions Jane in her culturally prescribed place. Rather, Bronte leaves the reader with a mental image of Jane once again gaining the upper hand in a power relationship by her forgiving St. John Rivers for his loveless proposal. She confides that he will soon be in Heaven, receiving his ultimate reward. Jane states, "I know that a stranger's hand will write to me next, to say that the good and faithful servant has been called at length into the joy of his Lord. And why weep for this?" (385). Bronte ultimately uses irony to highlight the circumstances which bring Jane and Rochester together. Her slightly satirical version of the classic Cinderella tale allows for an ending in which the heroine's voice is heard and amplified through circumstances where her husband is physically lessened before he can be with her.

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