

DISENCHANTING THE FAIRY TALE: A READING OF *JANE EYRE*

YURIKO NOTSU

Jane Eyre professes to be first and foremost, *An Autobiography* — namely, a retrospective tale of a woman's life written by herself. According to Fleishman, autobiography — or life-writing — is not simply a precise record of one's life but rather a more complex creation: "fictional creativity, selective construction, the goal of an integrated image of self have marked the activity of making autobiography from its inception" (*Figures of Autobiography*, 14). In other words, autobiography is effectually a form of self-reconstruction through which the narrator — the writing 'I' — attempts to recreate the self through retrospective self-narration by creating a younger 'I' who acts out selected stages of his or her life in the course of the novel. Hence, Jane's writing of her autobiography is necessarily closely connected to the reconstruction of her identity.

Indeed, Jane Eyre strives to do just that by narrating her life as she chooses to tell it from her initially precarious identity as an orphan — a figure that is literally defined by absence. As she declares, "I am only bound to invoke memory where I know her responses will possess some degree of interest" (91)¹, the narrating Jane attempts to reconstruct her self from childhood by selectively delineating the progress of her younger self within the model of a female *Bildungsroman*. Hence, it can be said that Jane Eyre is her text.

In effect, *Jane Eyre* can be read as a novel that is simultaneously constituted and motivated by Jane's pursuit of the "goal of an integrated image of self" (*Figures of Autobiography*, 14) in both spheres of the novel: within the text and the plot. First of all, in the textual realm of the novel, this is manifested in the protagonist/narrator's volition for an autono-

¹ Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*. ed. Beth Newman (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1996). References to the novel are to this edition and are parenthetically in the text.

mous speech/writing — uninhibited by interpolating speeches or interfering texts that destabilize her self-reconstruction.

Indeed, not only the narrating Jane but also the narrated Jane strives to reestablish her self through the acquisition of an autonomous speech. It is she whose silent voice the narrating Jane attempts to bring to life through her inscription. In other words, in the initial stages of the novel, the narrating and the younger Jane are inevitably disjunctive figures as the former acts as a ventriloquist for the latter.

However, as the younger Jane develops through each space that constitutes her social and individual progression from orphan to mistress, she seems to simultaneously acquire an autonomous voice. This is exemplified in the way she increasingly resists other characters' speeches that attempt to constrain her. In doing so, she struggles to articulate a 'self' independent of the patriarchal strictures that impose upon her stultifying, gender and class-defined roles.

Hence, as the younger Jane gains in verbal fluency, the rift between the narrating Jane and silenced protagonist is narrowed to a point at which it has almost vanished by the end of the novel: for example, in the moment of union when she states: "My Edward and I, then, are happy" (440). By means of this utterance that is declared in the present tense in the final pages of the autobiography, the narrating Jane and the narrated, younger Jane overlap as the mature autobiographer of *Jane Eyre*.

Simultaneously, the novel presents the independent figure of Jane as autonomous "mistress" in the plot, emphasizing her success from her initial status as a nonentity. In other words, by achieving an autonomous speech/writing in the textual realm along with her social progression within the plot, Jane seems to succeed in reconstructing her self as the triumphant heroine of a female *Bildungsroman*.

In effect, contemporary critics have viewed *Jane Eyre* as either a successful female *Bildungsroman* that depicts Jane's social and individual progress or a work that is shaped by a strong ideology of British imperialism in its final elimination of the symbolic native subject, Bertha Mason. Initially, the novel attracted attention as a landmark text of new feminist criticism through Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), in which they argued that the protagonist struggles to achieve an expression of selfhood under patriarchal oppression with successful consequences. Subsequently however, *Jane Eyre* was

given different analyses by postcolonial critics; in 'Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism' (1985), Gayatri Spivak focused upon Bertha as "a figure produced by the axiomatics of imperialism" (Spivak, Vol. 4, 515) who is eliminated from the novel in order to complete Jane's story. These apparently antithetical readings of the novel converge upon one point: Jane is perceived as achieving a consolidation of autonomous selfhood through her life-writing.

Indeed, on the surface, the novel seems to endorse Jane's assertion of success as an independent woman through the completion of her autobiography in both levels of the plot and text. However, I would maintain that in fact, once we unveil what lies underneath the intricate narrative text of the novel, the notion of Jane's successful self-reconstruction through her autobiography may be questioned.

That is to say, although she seems to acquire an autonomous voice/pen concomitant with her social accession in the plot, her progress on both levels of the novel is subverted by the text which implicitly disrupts this 'happy ending' through recourse to the most unlikely of forms: a fairy tale. This tale serves to problematize Jane's apparently successful self-reconstruction as an independent woman by finally engulfing her words. Hence, by examining the ways in which this tale lies in implicit contestation with the protagonist/narrator Jane's speech and writing, a hitherto unexplored aspect of *Jane Eyre* may be revealed.

Furthermore, I would maintain that not only Jane Eyre, but the often silenced Bertha Mason also strives to construct her 'self' in the text as she resists Rochester's speech by attempting to write her own 'autobiography'. By examining the respective revolts of these two women who are confined within Rochester's patriarchal verbal framework and their contrasting fates, the underlying theme of Brontë's novel may be reassessed.

I will begin by explicating the ways in which the younger, narrated Jane and the narrating Jane respectively achieve at least the illusory acquisition of an autonomous speech/writing concomitant to her social accession in the plot that allows *Jane Eyre* to be read so easily as a female *Bildungsroman*, and then go on to discuss in detail the mechanisms by which this quest for a successful self-reconstruction are undermined.

I.

The formative years of the younger Jane's life from Gateshead to Ferndean are constituted by her struggle to acquire an uninhibited voice — namely, a voice free from patriarchal social dictums that not only usurp her autonomy to define her self, but also impose gender and class-defined stultifying roles. For, in the initial stages of the novel, she is constantly threatened by interpolating speeches from other members of the household which she fails to refute. As a “discord” and a “dependant” child at Gateshead with no social stability or protection, Jane can only submit to others' voices that frame her ‘self’ in her stead.

In other words, her existence is continually confined within others' verbal frameworks — just as she is initially portrayed in the novel as secluded within the rigid window frame of Gateshead in “double retirement” (20) — or rather, in dual modes of confinement. The scene not only discloses Jane's literal incarceration at Gateshead as a being that must stay within the very margins of the house, but also her verbally framed and silenced situation.

Hence, it is indeed telling that the first words Jane speaks at Gateshead are an unanswered inquiry in response to another's speech over which she has no control: “What has Bessie say I have done?” (20) Jane is never informed of her nurse's speech, nor does she receive an explanation from Mrs. Reed, who rebuffs her question. Indeed, this epitomizes the younger Jane's initial silence and obscurity that parallel her dislocated social position, as arbitrary decisions concerning her destiny are determined for her by her social superiors.

However, Jane breaks out of such submission when she is confronted by Brocklehurst's gift of a “Child's Guide”, which he bids her to abide by, the “account of the . . . sudden death of Martha G____, a naughty child addicted to falsehood and deceit” (46). By imposing on her to correct herself according to another's tale, Brocklehurst denies her any ability to construct her ‘self’ through her own words. Hence, Jane rejects the imposition of this script and erupts against her aunt — directly revolting against the imminent threat to her acquisition of a voice of her own through which she may articulate her submerged ‘self’.

At Lowood, however, Jane's speech is threatened with obliteration once again, this time, by that of an emblem of patriarchal hypocrisy,

Brocklehurst. Her voice is rendered silent as he declares her a “liar” in front of the entire congregation of Lowood: “Ladies . . . you all see this girl? . . . it becomes my duty to warn you, that this girl . . . is . . . an interloper and an alien . . . this girl is — a liar!” (75). His aggressive speech depresses Jane into resignation, as she is unable to refute his unjust imputations. Indeed, Jane believes that Brocklehurst’s words hold an unsurpassable authority that reflects his status as the master of Lowood.

In effect, it is not Jane but Miss Temple’s “harmonious” speech that resolves Brocklehurst’s accusations through the citation of another patriarchal figure’s epistle. At first sight, this seems to imply Miss Temple’s control over her master. However, on the contrary, it discloses her very confinement within his power, as her speech complements the patriarchal doctrines he embodies.

It bears noting that Miss Temple only succeeds in defying his voice indirectly — after she validates her own voice as well as Jane’s through Mr. Lloyd’s epistle that confirms Jane’s version of her life story at Gateshead. In other words, the credibility of her speech depends upon Mr. Lloyd’s patriarchal reliability, just as her authority as the superintendent of Lowood is based upon that of Brocklehurst. That is, if she had not been hired by Brocklehurst in the first place, she would not have the authority to write to Mr. Lloyd on her own accord in order to elucidate the truth of the case. Hence, her ability to refute Brocklehurst’s accusations is solely the result of her fundamental conformity as the agent of her master. Furthermore, even her escape from Brocklehurst is achieved through her subservience to another clergyman “in the shape of a Reverend Mr. Nasmyth” (92). This initiates Jane’s realization of her mentor’s deficiencies and her subsequent flight from Lowood. It is during her life at her next abode, Thornfield, that Jane’s pursuit for an independent existence is simultaneously most developed and obstructed.

At first sight, Edward Rochester does not appear to be a despotic interpolator that the younger Jane must refute, as he does not threaten her speech by restricting her words or defining her unjustly. On the contrary, he encourages Jane to speak freely and asserts his congeniality with her, as he acknowledges her ability to converse frankly: “I mentally shake hands with you for your answer . . . the manner was frank and

sincere; one does not often see such a manner" (141). Indeed, it is their idiosyncratic affinity in speaking without "conventional forms" that establishes their intimacy.

Moreover, Rochester's specific entrustment of his confidence in Jane also precipitates their relationship. This is manifested in his admission to Jane of his love affair with Céline Varens, in which he emphasizes his estimation of Jane's mind: "you, with your gravity . . . and caution were made to be the recipient of secrets" (148). In other words, their apparent equality which forms the basis of their relationship derives from Jane's belief that they share a mutual truth-speaking propensity and confidence in each other's words.

In effect, because Rochester emphasizes his recognition of her as his chosen equal and confidant, Jane does not see his verbal intervention as intrusion, but simply as "his way" of speaking. For example, when Jane informs Rochester of the incident in which Bertha tears her wedding veil, he persuades her that it was simply a "creature of an over-stimulated brain" (282). Indeed, despite the fact that Rochester's version of the event completely invalidates Jane's account, it does not occur to her that she is being deluded, precisely because he has induced her to acknowledge their affinities in speech; they are both truthful and equal.

However, ironically, Jane is forced to realize the invasive nature of his speech upon their engagement. From the moment she promises to become his bride, Rochester imposes a variety of alien roles upon her, such as "elf" or "angel". Indeed, he hardly seems to notice her existence as he designates her as everything but who she is — Jane Eyre. Moreover, her anxiety is augmented by the portentous analogy between his assertive claim over her existence and over that of his mad wife.

As Rochester discloses his secret past, Jane finds herself juxtaposed with Bertha, who functions as the symbolic colonial 'other'. She is literally locked within the "secret chamber" for two thirds of the novel; metaphorically she is equally immersed in obscurity, as she remains perpetually unable to articulate her own speech. Indeed, Bertha initially seems to be an utterly contrasting figure to Jane, in terms of her social and narrative status in the novel. Yet when Rochester denies his wife any right to speech, Jane is also similarly silenced:

"That is *my wife*," said he. "Such is the sole conjugal embrace I am ever to

know . . . And *this* is what I wished to have" (laying his hand on my shoulder): "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. . . . Compare these clear eyes with the red balls yonder — this face with that mask — this form with that bulk . . ." (290)

As Jane is compared with Bertha in Rochester's utterance, she is similarly deprived of the ability to speak for herself despite the previous assumption of intimacy. Indeed, Rochester's definitive words that define Jane are ominously analogous to Brocklehurst's previous denunciation of her as a "liar" that had dispossessed Jane of her speech. Moreover, Jane learns through his confession that Bertha is not so mad as to be dispossessed of a voice altogether as she had been led to believe: "I had some trouble in finding an attendant for her . . . her ravings would inevitably betray my secret: besides, she had lucid intervals of days — sometimes weeks — which she filled up with abuse of me" (305). In other words, it is revealed that what had restricted Bertha to heretic speech and silence is not her illness, but precisely Rochester's verbal incarceration of her in his speech as a degenerate creature without a voice and his literal confinement of her in Thornfield. Hence, his speech initiates Jane's realization that his invasive voice threatens to redefine her as the "angel" who conveniently replaces his former wife. In order to reassert her 'self' by retrieving her autonomous speech, Jane chooses to start afresh "amongst strange faces and strange scenes" (300).

Jane's subsequent life at Moor House seems to reinforce the success of her quest for an uninhibited voice, as she recovers her authority with the acquisition of financial stability and familial origins. This is manifested in her successful self-assertions against the interpolator at Marsh End — St. John Rivers. He attempts to appropriate Jane's speech by summoning her to marry him and to lead a life governed by Christian piety as a missionary's wife in India — namely, to assimilate herself into the framed textual narrative he offers her in the form of a Bible as its peruser instead of creating her own life-writing. However, Jane declines to model her life upon his patriarchal religion, for she realizes that to accept his proposal would be tantamount to total self-abnegation.

Hence, when Jane returns to Rochester at Ferndean, she seemingly

possesses an unrestricted voice that corresponds to her procurement of a socially stable identity as an independent mistress. This is first exemplified in her effective subordination of the blind Rochester to her speech by verbally conveying the landscape to him. At the same time, the narrating Jane incorporates the other interpolators — such as Mrs. Reed and St. John — into her autobiography by narrating their respective fates. In other words, at this point, the younger Jane's voice and the narrating Jane's self-narration overlap with the mature figure of Jane Eyre in the plot, who triumphantly rejoices her social autonomy. Indeed, Jane's successful "integrated image of self" seems to have been achieved through her life-writing.

However, two disquieting factors overshadow the 'perfect' ending. Firstly, the site at which it takes place hardly reflects such success in its dreary environment. That is, Jane professes the marital happiness of her last abode profusely — perhaps, rather too profusely. Her hyperbolic narrative induces a sense of a factitious conclusion — particularly so because such perfected happiness is belied by the insalubrious reality of Ferndean.

Secondly, the fact that Jane is overtly silent upon a particular subject is made markedly clear by her contrasting verbosity in other matters — namely, that of Bertha Mason. Indeed, there is a clear contrast between the detailed explanations Jane provides for the fates of all the other characters and her silence upon Bertha's death, which is abbreviated into a bare portion of the innkeeper's tale: "Dead? Ay, 'dead' as the stones on which her brains and blood were scattered" (417). Jane hardly touches upon this information as she swiftly moves on to refer to Rochester, and hereafter, even short references to Bertha cease to appear. It is as if she deliberately abstains from referring to her in order to eliminate her presence from her life-writing.

Interestingly, many critics seem to take for granted that Jane has succeeded in eradicating all traces of Bertha. For example, Susan Meyer argues that the unhealthy atmosphere of Ferndean reflects Brontë's anxiety against her own tactics: the "brutal silencing" of the racial other in her text that parallels the oppression of colonial people by the British Empire. However, is Bertha truly silenced?

On the contrary, I would argue that the disjunction between Jane's hyperbolic portrayal of her happiness at Ferndean and the ominous

reality of the site reveals not only her underlying anxiety, but also the presiding existence of Bertha Mason. For, although Bertha appears to be annihilated from the text, Jane's very silence upon her existence haunts the ending of the novel, conversely evoking her shadow to the end. Moreover, the source of Jane's misgivings may be revealed by looking closely at Rochester's verbal interpolation in the fairy tale form which is embedded within her autobiography. These factors question, if not wholly undermine, Jane Eyre's 'happy ending' that curiously resembles a perfect 'fairy tale'.

Therefore, although Jane seemingly establishes an autonomous speech/writing along with her social progress, this unifying structure of the novel contains a rift under its smooth surface, which prefigures the final ending of the novel. In the following section, I shall demonstrate in detail the significance of the hitherto unexplored Rochester's fairy tale.

II.

The profuse allusions to the fairy tale tradition in *Jane Eyre* have been extensively explored by literary critics from various points of view. Many have pointed out the analogies between the depiction of Jane Eyre and of typical heroines of traditional fairy tales. For example, Gilbert and Gubar assert that Jane ventures upon her "pilgrim's progress as a sullen Cinderella, and angry Ugly Duckling" (Gilbert & Gubar, 259). Karen E. Rowe argues that the novel adopts "romantic paradigms" from different fairy tales that posit a "limited pattern for female maturation" which invariably culminates in marriage, only to eventually embrace the contrasting "Miltonic and Shakespearean models" (Rowe, 71), in order to create Jane Eyre. Indeed, there have been many critiques that have focused on the ways the novel is saturated with allusions to fairy tales.

Then, it comes as a surprise that Rochester's explicit fairy tale has been so wholly deprived of substantial literary analyses, despite its critical role in the novel as the embedded tale that finally subsumes Jane's attempt to complete her own autobiography. Moreover, the fact that Rochester frequently denominates the names of fairy-tale creatures such as "fairy" or "goblin", solely to Jane and Bertha and its implications has also been hitherto unacknowledged. In fact, many critics seem to perceive Rochester's fantastic allusions and his fairy tale in the same light as

Adèle — merely an insignificant “badinage” by a “vrai menteur” (266).² However, I would maintain that such fairy designations of Jane and Bertha by Rochester, and his overt illustration of Jane as the heroine of his fairy tale reveal the ways by which he attempts to subvert the speech/writing of both women by incorporating them into his own fairy tale as fictitious, voiceless characters.

I would like to begin firstly by demonstrating the significance of Rochester’s fairy tale in *Jane Eyre* as it assimilates her life-writing within its own framework — ultimately destabilizing Jane’s self-reconstruction. I will then go on to look closely at the significance of Rochester’s designation of Bertha as the other fantastic creature within the novel, whom he attempts to silence besides Jane Eyre.

Rochester’s fairy tale is initiated by Adèle’s innocent rejoinder to his soliloquy in which he remarks in jest that he will “send her to school” upon his marriage with Jane, implying his wish to have her entirely as his own. When Adèle asks if she must go without Jane, Rochester replies, “Yes . . . absolutely sans mademoiselle; for I am to take mademoiselle to the moon” (265). His fantastic explanation does not appeal to Adèle, as she observes the impracticality of his plans and points out that “there is no road to the moon” (265).

However, regardless of his ward’s incredulity, Rochester begins his fairy tale that is seemingly a combination of both his wishful plans and his actual encounter with Jane. The first half of his tale is as follows:

Adèle, look at that field. . . . In that field . . . I was walking late one evening about a fortnight since . . . , I sat down to rest me on a stile; and there I took out a little book and a pencil, and began to write about a misfortune that befell me long ago, and a wish I had for happy days to come: I was writing away very fast, though daylight was fading from the leaf, when something came up the path, and stopped two yards off me. I looked at it. It was a little thing with a veil of gossamer on its head. I beckoned it to come near me: it stood soon at my knee. I never spoke to it, and it never spoke to me, in words: but I read its eyes, and it read mine; and our speechless colloquy was to this effect: — (265)

² Rosemarie Bodenheimer — who remarks upon it albeit briefly — sees it as a “dubious and irresponsible tale” that simply reflects Rochester’s “refusal to imagine Jane as a social being” by defining her as an imaginary elf in his fairy tale. (Bodenheimer, 164) However, she does not attribute further significance to his tale.

Rochester's silencing of both the narrating and the younger Jane is implied through these words. First of all, he displaces the latter into his fairy tale as a fictitious character and enforces upon her his words by narrating her speech in her stead. At the same time, he usurps the narrating Jane's power as the single autobiographer and narrator of her self, so becoming the other implicit 'autobiographer'.

Rochester clearly discloses himself as such, as he specifically proclaims to be writing a record of his life which is constituted by the "misfortune" he had experienced in the past and the "wish... for happy days to come". If we perceive autobiography as essentially, "a form that strives to accommodate fact and desire, circumstances as they actually occurred and the longing that they — or oneself — had been somehow different", the analogy is clear (Carlisle, 133). In other words, his tale implies that Rochester is not only an interpolator but also an implicit autobiographer, writing a retrospective tale of his own life and of Jane, within the textual framework of her autobiography.

As there can be no two autobiographers for a single being that is Jane Eyre, Rochester's claim violates the credibility of the very title of Jane's life-writing altogether. That is, the title, *Jane Eyre: An Autobiography*, which should primarily reinforce the integrated unity and stability of Jane's existence, is suddenly made void of meaning, as the ominous shadow of another autobiographer infringes upon it. However, the true extent of Rochester's usurpation of Jane's role as narrator of her autobiography is signified in the very plot of his tale. The latter part of his fairy tale continues as follows:

It was a fairy, and come from Elf-land, it said; and its errand was to make me happy: I must go with it out of the common world to a lonely place — such as the moon, for instance — and it nodded its head towards her horn, rising over Hay hill: it told me of the alabaster cave and silver vale where we might live. I said I should like to go; but reminded it, as you did me, that I had no wings to fly.

"Oh," returned the fairy, 'that does not signify! Here is a talisman will remove all difficulties,' and she held out a pretty gold ring. 'Put it,' she said, 'on the fourth finger of my left hand, and I am yours, and you are mine; and we shall leave earth, and make our own heaven yonder.' She nodded again at the moon. (265–266)

After having narrated his tale, Rochester reveals to Adèle the identity of its protagonist: “‘Mademoiselle is a fairy,’ he said, whispering mysteriously” (266). Jane immediately denies this denomination and his tale altogether by enjoining Adèle to ignore his “badinage”. However, consequently, Rochester’s seemingly harmless tale turns out to possess a greater validity than Jane’s life-writing itself, as it perfectly preempts the climactic ending of her autobiography. That is to say, although Rochester’s tale can be read on the surface, as a wishful account of his desires concerning his relationship with Jane, its significance lies in a deeper source: within its patriarchal plot.

This is exemplified in the entire plot of his fairy tale. According to Rochester, the fairy comes to him one day and entreats him to “go with it out of the common world to a lonely place” (265), where they would be able to live together. Rochester replies in the affirmative to this proposal, but reminds her that he has “no wings to fly”. The fairy promises to dispel this impediment for him whereupon she prompts him to marry her. Indeed, there is a salient analogy between the plot of the fairy tale and the actual ending of Jane’s autobiography, in that his fairy-tale script is entirely replayed by Jane in the zenith of her life-writing.

Firstly, Jane effectively proposes to Rochester — to “make him happy” — upon her arrival at Ferndean: “I will be your companion — to read to you . . . to be eyes and hands to you” (424). However, just as in his fairy tale, Rochester’s initial reaction to Jane’s proposal is an indication of the hindrance he embodies — he has “no wings to fly”. In other words, Rochester implies that the obstacle to his accepting Jane as his wife lies in his crippled state.

Moreover, in the same way that the fairy dispels Rochester’s anxieties by insisting upon her marriage that “will remove all difficulties”, Jane reassures him that she finds his physical “deficiencies” as hardly an impediment, but rather as something that will fortify their union: “I love you better now, when I can really be useful to you, than I did in your state of proud independence . . .” (434).

In addition, there is a correspondence between the final destinations the two tales present. While Rochester’s fairy invites him to live with her in “a lonely place . . . out of the common world”, Jane finally decides to reside with her husband at Ferndean Manor, which is also such a desolate spot — “deep buried in a wood”. Furthermore, Adèle — whom

Rochester had predicted in his fairy tale that she would be sent to school in order to make Jane his own — is indeed, sent away. In other words, the ending of Jane's autobiography nearly perfectly traces Rochester's fairy tale.

Therefore, Jane duplicates Rochester's tale at the culminating point of unifying self-reconstruction. Hence, despite her apparently complete acquisition of a unified self in the end, her self-reconstruction through her autobiography is rendered incomplete; Rochester's interpolation effectively silences the younger Jane's speech as well as distorts the framework of the narrating Jane's life-writing by taking over the role of arbiter. Indeed, the last picture we are given of Jane and Rochester epitomizes the portentous usurpation of Jane's unobstructed speech and writing by Rochester: Jane is "writing a letter to his dictation" (439). In other words, this scene symbolizes Jane's loss of autonomous speech/writing through Rochester's verbal interpolation, as not only is her speech silenced in this act, but her writing is also literally enfolded within Rochester's 'dictating' voice altogether.

Thence, although *Jane Eyre* has often been read as a successful female *Bildungsroman*, such delineation is subverted by her continued confinement within the patriarchal framework from which she is striving to escape. Indeed, Rochester disrupts Jane's self-reconstruction by enclosing her within his own tale as the speechless fairy-protagonist who may neither speak nor write on its own. Just as he speaks for the fairy, he ultimately does so for Jane Eyre herself by overwriting her autobiography.

However, this does not explain the other ominous factor that disrupts the apparently harmonious, 'happy ending': Jane's peculiar silence upon the other woman in the novel — Bertha Mason. In contrast to Jane, Bertha is not submerged within his explicit fairy tale, but as Rochester's frequent designation of her as a "goblin" or "demon" exemplifies, she is often defined by him as a fantastic, degenerate, but cunning existence. In other words, just as Jane's speech and writing is nullified by confinement with the role of a fairy within his story, Bertha is similarly displaced into a mad "goblin" that is devoid of speech altogether — and thereby effectively silenced.

Many feminist and post colonialist critics have argued that Bertha is finally literally 'silenced' and hence, eliminated from the text without any opportunity to produce her own speech or writing. Gilbert and Gubar,

Spivak and Meyer invariably view her death as a negative manifestation that either signifies a "purgatory" or an enforced penance which compensates for Rochester's past sins, or dispels the impediment to Jane's acquisition of an independent existence.

However, I would maintain that Bertha succeeds in 'writing back' against Rochester's confining speech. That is to say, while Jane is assimilated into his fairy tale, Bertha breaks free from Rochester's binding words. In the following section, I will examine the degree of success of her idiosyncratic life-writing.

III.

Bertha's will to break through the constraints of Rochester's speech to assert her 'self' is suggested even before the novel discloses her true identity. Two thirds of Chapter 15 is comprised of Rochester's confession to Jane of his affair with Céline Varens. It bears noting that while Jane is rendered silent as a passive listener to his tale, Bertha ruptures his narration and refutes against it by inscribing her version of his destiny over his words and himself. This is manifested in Rochester's abrupt allusion to the "hag" who disrupts his speech through her "lurid hieroglyphs".

While Jane listens to Rochester speak, she observes his countenance change into a singular expression of "impatience, disgust, detestation" (148) upon seeing Thornfield. This is clearly the result of his reflections upon the hideous "goblin" that resides in his home, but Jane remains oblivious to the fact. Furthermore, an even more mystifying explanation ensues:

During the moment I was silent, Miss Eyre, I was arranging a point with my destiny. She stood there . . . a hag like one of those who appeared to Macbeth on the heath of Forres. 'You like Thornfield?' she said, lifting her finger; and then she wrote in the air a memento, which ran in lurid hieroglyphs all along the house-front, between the upper and lower row of windows. 'Like it if you can! Like it if you dare!' (148)

The significance of this passage lies in its covert presentation of Bertha as a potential arbiter of Rochester's destiny — the powerful writer of a "memento" that prophesizes a devastating end upon his house qua body.

Indeed, Thornfield may be plausibly identified with Rochester himself, as it can be seen from Brontë's numerous "symbolic identifications" of the "house and master" — both in its physical aspects and in its masking of the secret past that is embodied in Bertha. (Martin, 73) Hence, the fact that Rochester sees his "destiny" writing her "lurid hieroglyphs" upon the house is suggestive of her latent power to revolt against his confining speech. In fact, this scene truly functions as a prophecy, for Bertha subsequently inscribes her self upon Rochester's body through burning down Thornfield.

It bears noting that Rochester is crippled by the fire Bertha sets to the house, not killed and thus, obliterated from the text. As Rochester had dehumanized her as a savage, a fantastic being without the ability to speak or write, she avenges herself on him for her usurped voice by inscribing her own story upon his body in the form of a hieroglyphic sign.

Peter Brooks suggests that "Signing or marking the body signifies its passage into writing, its becoming a literary body, and generally also a narrative body, in that the inscription of the sign depends on and produces a story. The signing of the body is an allegory of the body become a subject for literary narrative — a body entered into writing" (Brooks, 3). Furthermore, he also points out that "bodily marking not only serves to recognize and identify, it also indicates the body's passage into the realm of the letter, into literature: the bodily mark is in some manner a 'character', a hieroglyph, a sign that can eventually, at the right moment of the narrative, be read" (Brooks, 22).

Then, Bertha's marking of Rochester's body can be seen as her idiosyncratic attempt to create her life-writing. Thus, although Bertha's physicality is annihilated from the novel through her death, she achieves a resonating existence through the hieroglyphics that continue to generate her story of Rochester's past sins. In effect, this is exemplified in Rochester's physical metamorphoses into his deceased wife in two ways.

Firstly, Rochester himself begins to resemble Bertha after her inscription upon his body. This can be observed in Jane's remarks upon seeing his "cicatrizied visage" at Ferndean: "You have a 'faux air' of Nebuchadnezzar in the fields about you" (425). Her indication of him as embodying "a sham appearance of savageness" implies that Rochester has been transformed into embodying his former definitions of Bertha as

an animalistic being. Moreover, Rochester's condition also resembles Bertha's as a confined nonentity at Thornfield, effectively becoming a "hermit" (417) who secludes himself in Ferndean. These metamorphoses seem to indicate Bertha's successful inscription of her own life-writing — albeit provisionally.

That is to say, although Bertha's writing is indeed manifested upon Rochester's body, it is also true that such writing remains unintelligible until the end as heretic hieroglyphs. Such portrayal of Bertha's writing implies its derogatory status as a primitive mode of discourse belonging to the savage, native subject, compared to the civilized language of Jane and Rochester.

Hence, Bertha's life-writing is depicted as essentially an ambiguous discourse: it is at once a degraded form of speech that is never allowed full realization, but simultaneously, remains potentially threatening to the patriarchal discourse Rochester embodies. In other words, the novel exhibits an ambivalent acknowledgment of Bertha's narrative which reflects the similarly conflicting sentiments the Victorian patriarchy held against their colonial native subjects: although such natives were seen as phylogenetically inferior for their inability to speak the English language; nevertheless, they were also feared as potential rebels with an alien tongue, who may revolt against them to bring their fall.

However, at the end of the novel, Bertha's life-writing is dissolved as her hieroglyphs are eventually nullified by Rochester's recovery from blindness and the birth of his son — which not only signifies a symbolic rebirth of patriarchal superiority, but also a final assertion of Victorian colonialism. What is still more to the point, however, is that such recuperation is achieved only through the care of his domestic 'fairy', Jane Eyre. In other words, Rochester's patriarchal fairy tale is fully consolidated as the dominant discourse at the end of Jane's autobiography, precisely through Jane's failure to complete her autonomous life-writing. Indeed, Jane collaborates in the completion, not of her autonomous life-writing but of Rochester's, by unconsciously relegating herself to becoming the perfect protagonist of Rochester's fairy tale.

Thence, both Bertha's and Jane's attempts to reconstruct their precarious identities through the completion of their life-writings fail in the face of Rochester's tale. Nevertheless, it bears noting that although Bertha's heretic life-writing is ultimately dissolved, she articulates at least a distinct

protest against Rochester's constrictive words through her inscription to a certain degree — as exemplified in Rochester's partly crippled body. By contrast, Jane not only fails to establish her speech/writing, but also remains oblivious to her very assimilation into the pattern of Rochester's fairy tale, as she glorifies her subservience to her master in the end. Then, what is the implication of this contrasting juxtaposition that the novel presents? Moreover, what undergirds the illustration of the intertwining narratives of Jane, Rochester and Bertha?

First of all, by juxtaposing the native subject and the Victorian woman as analogously subjected by Victorian patriarchal ideologies, and by illustrating that it is the former who achieves her partially successful self-reconstruction, the novel protests against patriarchal ideologies that confine the Victorian woman to a domestic role, by implying that they deprive her of the chance to construct an autonomous 'self'.

In effect, Victorian women were caught within patriarchal strictures that obstructed their autonomous self-reconstruction. They were enforced to participate in the consolidation of the very social structures that confined themselves as domestic angels who fortified the patriarchal lineage through child-rearing and as agents of imperialism, for failure to do so signified a loss of identity itself. For example, women's "lack of attachment to a family" or "women's independent action" were considered tantamount to a loss of "meaning to their lives" — namely, a loss of social identity. (Davidoff & Hall, 114)

On the other hand, the native subject is able to recognize his/her subordination by Victorian patriarchy as subjection and to revolt against it accordingly because they possess a separate culture and history upon which they may ground their identity. As Edward Said asserts,

As imperialism increased in scope and in depth, so too, in the colonies themselves, the resistance mounted. Just as in Europe the global accumulation that gathered the colonial domains into the world market economy was . . . enabled by a culture giving empire ideological license, so in the overseas imperium the massive political, economic, and military resistance was carried forward . . . by an actively provocative and challenging culture of resistance. This was a culture with a long tradition of integrity and power in its own right, not simply a belated reactive response to Western imperialism. (Said, 222)

Thus, by depicting Bertha as the native subject who succeeds in at least revolting against her oppressor by inscribing her heretic life-writing — albeit prematurely, the novel implies that the native subject effectively holds a less encumbered position to the Victorian woman who is submerged within patriarchal ideologies — unable to articulate an autonomous and distinct selfhood.

In effect, Jane's life-writing finally remains submerged as an untextualized, silent fragment within her unrealized autobiography, only to be heard within Jane's "inward ear" (116). This is clearly proclaimed by Jane in the frequently quoted passage of the novel in which she protests against the patriarchal social dictums that bind and silence women into confining roles.

Women . . . feel just as men feel . . . 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 than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex. (117)

However, because Jane is unable to consummate such desires in reality, she turns to fulfilling it in her own mind:

Then my sole relief was . . . *to open my inward ear to a tale that was never ended — a tale my imagination created, and narrated continuously; quickened with all of incident, life, fire, feeling, that I desired and had not in my actual existence.* (my emphasis, 116)

It is evident that Jane projects her ideal world, free of patriarchal constraint in her tale — a place where women would not be enforced to "confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings" (117). However, she is finally unable to textualize such a tale within her autobiography, but resigns herself to becoming the peruser of another's tale as the protagonist of a socially-abiding fairy tale.

Hence, as we have observed, through the intertwining and conflicting writings of Jane, Bertha and Rochester's tale, Brontë illumines the often overlooked situation of the oppressed Victorian woman, who is deluded into an illusory 'self' that patriarchal ideologies impose upon her. Indeed,

Jane's confinement under the illusion of happiness and freedom as domestic angel is alike the final abode of Ferndean: it is seemingly perfect like a well-made fairy tale, but nevertheless, somewhat "insalubrious". Thus, by incorporating an implicit subtext in *Jane Eyre* that is revealed through a close examination of the textual narrative, Brontë succeeds in depicting the debilitating effects of domestic gender repression upon the Victorian woman's life in her own idiosyncratic way.

The University of Tokyo (Graduate Student)

Received August 31, 2005

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