Title of Paper: The Representation of Resistance and Transcendence in Charlotte Bronte’s Jane Eyre and Villette

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Abstract: Both Jane Eyre (1847) and Villette (1852) are narratives of psychological development that raise the moral question of the relation of woman’s self-transcendence to self-indulgence on the one hand and self-negation on the other. Jane Eyre and Villette, which deploy Romance and Gothicism, are narratives of Bildungsroman in which Jane Eyre and Lucy Snowe progress from dispossessed orphanhood to self-possession. While Jane’s narrative is framed in a language of resistance, expressiveness, liberty, transcendence and power through interlocking treatment of the themes of repetition in woman’s ordinary lives, Lucy’s narrative is framed in a language of self-denial and repression. I argue that Jane achieves transcendence by destroying the passionate other, Bertha while Lucy achieves transcendence by exorcising a nun (none) self that is created by repression. In Villette, the gothic drama of Lucy is set in a social context while in Jane Eyre, it depicts the psychological development of the heroine.

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Introduction:

Charlotte’s *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* are Victorian novels which ‘consider the problems of the boundaries of the self as an aspect of women’s special psychological, social, and moral dilemmas’ (Perils 193). Following the critical lines of feminism and psychoanalysis, I argue that the protagonists of both novels, Jane Eyre and Lucy Snowe, wrestle between transcendence (in the sense of moving beyond oppressing forces) and self-negation and between imagination and reason. The result is a conflation of romance and realism that depicts the realities of suffering and pain in the contexts of woman’s life. I contend that both novels are riddled with hidden secrets and ghosts that haunt the female protagonists psychologically and physically. I argue that the heroines' transcendence of oppression, manifested in the destruction of Bertha Mason who represents Jane's repressed passion and the nun who represents Lucy’s subdued sexuality, ends with their communication with or waiting for one single male figure.

*Jane Eyre*

Once we meet Jane, she is an outcast in a world that determines to intrude on her. The result is ‘two central longings—to be independent and loved’ (Yeazell, 1975, p. 129). She excludes herself from joining the Reed family members as she is not ‘contented, happy, little child’ (p. 20), she ‘shrined in double retirement’ (p. 20) behind a curtain, mediating in Bewick’s images so as to transcend the boundaries of her restricted life into expansive existence and distant realms. However, because of John Reed’s intrusion on her private enclosure (‘What were you doing behind the curtain?’), her passionate counterattack against this ‘tyrant’ and ‘murderer’, and Mrs. Reed’s confinement of her in the red room, she suffers the horror of being ‘force(d) deeply into herself’ (Gilbert and Gubar, 1979, p. 340). This initial passage of Jane’s life emphasises Jane’s sexuality. The ‘mad cat’, the ‘bad animal’, John calls her, who is locked in the red room, will reappear later as the mad Bertha whose lodging is another-red room at the third floor of Thornfield.

The Red Room in which Mrs Reed confines Jane is an external image of Jane’s interior. Confined there, she perceives a ghostly creature, ‘gazing at me with a white face and arms specking the gloom, and glittering eyes of fear moving where all else was still’ (p. 46). This ghostly thing of fear is her own fearful self which is created by Mrs. Reed’s tyranny: ‘What a miserable little poltroon had fear, engendered of unjust punishment, made of me in those days!’ (p. 63). Showalter points out that the Red
The Victorian Room, ‘with its deadly and bloody connotations, its Freudian wealth of secret compartments, wardrobes, drawers, and jewel chest’, is ‘a paradigm of female inner space’ (114-15). Gilbert and Gubar (1979) argue that ‘[T]he red-room, stately, chilly, swathed in rich crimson, with a great white bed an easy chair ‘like a pale throne’ looming out of the scarlet darkness, perfectly represents [Jane’s] vision of the society in which she is trapped’ (p. 340). The red room is Jane’s inner self and an external world of alienation out of which Jane’s alien self is created.

Jane’s verbal violence and criticism she unleashed against Mrs Reed leads to her verbal constraint. Reed controls Jane's self-expression: ‘Until you speak pleasantly, remain silent’ (p. 39). ‘Silence! This violence is almost repulsive’ (p. 49). Jane’s self-defence, a transgression of the bounds of silence, is represented in images of power, energy and expansion: ‘Ere I had finished this reply, my soul began to expand, to exult, with the strangest sense of freedom, of triumph, I ever felt’ (p. 48). Gilbert and Gubar (1979) assert that Jane’s behaviour is ‘an extraordinary self-assertive act of which neither a Victorian child nor a Cinderella was ever supposed to be capable’ (p. 343). However, Jane recognizes that transcendence through ‘fierce speaking’ is an illusion: ‘A ridge of lighted heath […] would have been a great emblem of my mind when I accused and menaced Mrs. Reed […] when half an hour’s silence and reflection had shown me the madness of my conduct’ (p. 48). Her linguistic violence towards Mrs. Reed marks out her encounter with Mr. Brocklehurst who removes her to Lowood ‘where orphan girls are starved and frozen into proper Christian submission’ (Gilbert and Gubar, 1979, p. 344).

The view of transcendence to which she is drawn at Lowood is associated with self-containment rather than self-justification, restraint rather than passion. This mode of transcendence is manifested in the figures of Helen Burns and Miss Temple. Helen’s doctrine links the complete rejection of self-defence to a fantasy of transcendence beyond mortality: ‘If we were dying in pain and shame, if scorn smote us on all sides, and hatred crushed us, angels see our tortures, recognise our innocence […] and God waits only a separation of spirit from flesh to crown us with a full reward’ (p. 101). Helen responds to accusations against her by silence: ‘Burns made no answer: I wondered at her silence. Why, thought I, does she not explain[…]?’ (p. 86). Helen believes that the fact that angels ‘recognize our innocence’ makes self-vindication in the face of earthly tyranny unnecessary. Stone (1980) notes that Helen educates Jane about ‘fortitude in the face of misfortunes, an attitude very different from her own rebelliousness’ (p. 115). However, Jane cannot accept Helen’s doctrine of self-negation and submission, saying that if a teacher ‘struck me with that rod, I should get it from her hand; I should break it under her nose’ (p. 65). Gilbert and Gubar (1979) remark that Jane’s ‘way of confronting the world is still the promethean way of fiery rebellion, not Miss Temple’s way of ladylike repression, not Helen Burns’ way of saintly renunciation’ (p. 347).
Jane’s mentor, Miss Temple, is also associated with linguistic constraint and full submission; she responds to Brocklehurst’s accusations that she feeds the girls’ ‘vile bodies’ while starving their ‘immortal souls’ (p. 63) by silence: ‘Miss Temple had always something […] of refined propriety in her language, which precluded deviation into the ardent, the excited, the eager’ (p. 81). While Jane says that Miss Temple ‘had stood me in the steed of mother, governess, and, latterly, companion’ (p. 72), Jane perceives Lowood where she learns this philosophy of self-abnegation and submission as ‘prison grounds, exile limits’ (p. 93). She realizes ‘that the real world was wide’ and she yearns ‘to seek real knowledge amidst its perils’ (p. 93). Jane is stressed by the bounded horizon, the limited sphere of knowledge and by the dull iteration of her monotonous labour: ‘School rules, school duties, school habits […] such as what I knew of existence’, she says. ‘And I felt that was not enough’ (p. 93). She, therefore, utters a passionate prayer for ‘liberty’ that can be fulfilled beyond the boundaries of Lowood. However, as Terry Eagleton (1975) notes, her prayers for liberty are scattered in the wind and what her flight of imagination ends with and what her ‘repressed self can finally affirm is a refreshing novel kind of passivity’ (p. 26). And passivity is precisely what Jane finds at Thornfield.

Thornfield turns out to be the crux of domestic gothic where women's activities are limited to raising children and running households. The horror of such a world is pointed out by de Beauvoir (2010) who compares the housework with its endless repetition which is an aspect of ‘immanence’ with ‘the torment of Sisyphus’ (pp. 484, 487). For de Beauvoir, repetition curtails women's agency and self-transcendence. Associating her work with stagnation, Jane longs for a ‘power of vision which might overpass’ (p. 116) the boundaries of her restricted life. The objects of her transcendent longings are ‘the busy world, towns […] more of intercourse with my kind’ (p. 116). Jane the narrator comments on these longings, mediating on the truths hidden in women’s Gothic life:

Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise of their faculties, and a field for their efforts, as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. It is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex (pp. 116-17).

Jane articulates a radical feminist agenda, asking for female independence and equality. Jane's feminist assertion was perceived an 'irreligious dissatisfaction with the social order' by Victorian critics of Jane Eyre (Gilbert et al 369). Jane notes that many women suffer silently in secret as none knows the restlessness pent inside them and hidden beneath their apparent calm. This life is manifested in the figure of Grace.
Poole who works as an interface between the boredom of women's repetitive work and the nightmare of Bertha's reiterated laugh.

Grace Poole is the uncanny double of Bertha. As Gilbert and Gubar (1979) argue, it is ‘almost as if, with her pint of porter, her ‘staid and taciturn’ demeanor, she were the madwoman’s public representative’ (p. 350). Herself ‘a person of few words’ (p. 142), with ‘miraculous self-possession’ (p. 185), Grace is an emblem of those ordinary women who silently guard their feelings. Grace is ‘as companionless as a prisoner in his dungeon’ (p. 194), guarding her inner restless nature, Bertha. Appropriately, Grace’s main duty is to prevent Bertha from speaking: ‘Too much noise’, Grace’, Says Mrs Fairfax after Bertha’s laughter, ‘Remember directions!’ (p. 115). Rochester, the man that Jane meets outside and associates him with escape, is now inside, master of the gloomy mansion she treads.

The knowledge of the vast existence Jane yearns to know is made incarnate in the figure of the well-travelled, Byronic hero, Rochester. She meets him outside and he knows the ‘busy worlds, towns’ (p. 116) she yearns to know. He opens to her a world beyond her, a ‘power of vision’ (p. 116) and an opportunity to be alive and active. Her relationship with him is described in images of openness, expansion and vision: ‘I love Thornfield because I have talked, face to face, with what I reverence, with what I delight in—with an original, a vigorous, an expanded mind. I have known you, Mr Rochester’ (p. 251). She describes her communication with him like the communion of saints before God: ‘We stood at God’s feet, equal—as we are’ (p. 252). This language underlines how profound that Jane’s transcendence involves human ties – a transcendence, like that of Helen’s, overpasses the limits but in this human world: perfect, ideal communication without the barriers of ‘custom, conventionalities, even mortal flesh’ (p. 252). However, Jane’s relationship with Rochester does not justify the religious imagery of transcendence, of equality as the madwoman hidden at the heart of this gothic world is Rochester’s wife and she is an impediment of mutual knowledge and equality between them.

Rochester is portrayed as a controlling man who apparently controls Jane: ‘I did as I was bid [...]. Mr. Rochester had such a direct way of giving orders, it seemed a matter of course to obey him promptly’ (p. 111). Rochester treats Jane as his possession, adorning her with jewels and expensive dresses: ‘I will myself put a diamond chain around your neck [...] and I will clasp the bracelets on these fine wrists, and load these fairy-like fingers with rings’ (p. 220). While Rochester uses the images of imprisonment and slavery while talking to Jane, Jane defies his perception of her as a possession: ‘I never can bear being dressed like a doll by Mr. Rochester, or sitting like a second Danae with the golden shower falling daily round me’ (p. 229). Rochester demonstrates signs of possessiveness by referring to Jane as ‘Jane Rochester’ (p. 220) and describing her as ‘young Mrs. Rochester – Fairfax Rochester’s girl-bride’ (p. 220).

While Rochester ‘liked to open to a mind unacquainted with the world, glimpses of its scenes’ (p. 151), he indulges in what Jane calls ‘discourse which is all
darkness to me’ (p. 144), compelling her to say ‘I don’t understand you at all’ (p. 143). During Rochester’s absence, she thinks with pleasure of her impending marriage: ‘I thought of the life that lay before me – your life, sir – an existence more expansive and stirring than my own’ (p. 278). This vast existence turns to be narrow confinement and the knowledge and activity of mind he offers is terrible stagnation that is manifested in the figure of Bertha, a woman Rochester married ‘for sex, for money, for everything but love and equality’ (Gilbert and Gubar, 1979, p. 356). Bertha is the gothic nightmare of Rochester who refuses to acknowledge her as ‘a part of me’ (p. 302). As the restless self pent up inside Grace Poole’s outer calm, ‘Bertha represents the possibility that marriage will not deliver Jane from restlessness, but rather confine her to it’ (Delamotte, 1990, p. 212). Jane’s marriage to Rochester would, therefore, be a burial in a sphere of domestic immanence.

Bertha, Jane’s alter-ego, is the self-concealed behind Jane, bursting out of confinement in a destructive self-expression. Bertha is described as animal-like: ‘What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight, tell: it grovelled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal’ (p. 250). There a lot of similarities between Jane and Bertha as manifested in the language used to describe both of them. For example, John Reed refers to Jane as a ‘bad animal’ (p. 7). Bertha’s destructive exercise of her pent up faculties is linked to Jane’s longings for transcendence. In this scene, the picture of Jane looking out of the battlements of Thornfield is broken into two parts: Jane’s longings as she looks out beyond her confinement and Bertha’s experience as yet unknown to her, but going on just below her of animal rage, are clearly connected – Bertha’s ‘eccentric murmurs […] uncannily echo the murmurs of Jane’s imagination’ (Gilbert and Gubar, 1979, p. 360). However, Jane’s longings are higher while Bertha’s are lower.

Against these lower longings of lust, self-indulgence and confinement, Bertha, an ‘avatar of Jane’ (Gilbert and Gubar, 1979, p. 359), plays multiple roles in Jane’s struggle to defend herself. Bertha tears the wedding veil to prevent Jane form getting married to Rochester. Jane desires to be Rochester’s ‘equal in size and strength, so that she can battle him in the contest of their marriage’ (Gilbert and Gubar, 1979, p. 359). Bertha acts out Jane’s desire by physically attacking Rochester: ‘the lunatic sprang and grappled his throat viciously, and laid her teeth to his cheek: they struggled […] more than once she almost throttled him, athletic as he was’ (p. 250). The attack on Rochester is Bertha’s way of acting out Jane’s repressed desire to confront Rochester. Bertha is Jane’s ‘truest and darkest double: she is the angry aspect of the orphan child, the ferocious secret self Jane has been trying to repress ever since her days at Gateshead’ (Gilbert and Gubar, 1979, p. 360). As the uncanny double of Jane, Bertha protects Jane ‘until the literal and symbolic death of Bertha frees her from the furies that torment her and makes possible a marriage of equality – makes possible that is wholeness within herself’ ( Gilbert and Gubar, 1979, p. 362). Gilbert and Gubar (1979) note that Jane’s surname hints at the passion and anger illuminated throughout the novel: ‘Jane Eyre – her name is of course suggestive – is invisible as air, the heir to nothing, secretly choking with ire’ (p. 342). While Jane
Eyre depicts female oppression under patriarchal power, Bertha is the image of female rebellion against patriarchal oppression.

When the ‘impediment’ to Jane’s marriage is announced, Rochester tells Jane that he avoids the indulgence of passion that ‘approach(es) me to her (Bertha) and her vices’ (p. 307). However, during his attempt to work on Jane’s passion, he is a man ‘who is just about to burst an insufferable bond and plunge headlong into wild licence’ (p. 298). Had Jane submitted to her passion as Rochester’s mistress, this would be to submit herself, for ‘hiring a mistress’, as Rochester himself says, ‘is the next worst thing to buying a slave: both are often by nature and always by position, inferior’ (p. 307). Therefore, Jane flees Rochester to fight for her identity that she is in danger of losing in surrendering to his passion. Jane’s wandering and homelessness symbolise ‘the nameless, placeless and contingent status of women in a patriarchal society’ (Gilbert et al 364). Indeed, it is her own identity which she finds when she goes to the Rivers’ home for the Rivers turn to be her cousins.

However, the threat of Jane’s integrity and identity comes from her cousin, St. John. Yeazell (1975) argues that St. John’s mode of transcendence – participation in his own mission – is Jane’s ‘final, and most dangerous temptation’ (p. 140). St. John’s ‘longing for egress and expansion have a strong affinity to Jane’s’ (Delamotte, 1990, p. 216). He plays on Jane’s need for escape from confinement, stagnation, repetition and restlessness: ‘I am sure you cannot long be content to pass your leisure in solitude, and to devote your working hours to a monotonous labour wholly devoid of stimulus: any more than I can be content […] to live here buried […] rav(ing) in my restlessness’ (p. 349). St. John tells Jane of his release from the torment of restlessness and passivity after he goes to the mission: ‘After a season of darkness and struggling light broke and relief fell’ (p. 354). St. John’s references to the images of repetition, inactivity and burial alive echo those that Jane associated with women’s work at Thornfield. Moreover, John’s relief from restlessness and inaction is described in images of energy, development and transcendence – images that are associated with Jane’s longings for transcendence. However, St. John’s apparent energetic soul turns out to be a manifestation of passivity rather than action, self-negation rather than self-fulfilment. He is ‘cold’ (p. 383), ‘frozen’ (p. 421) and he is ‘a cold cumbersome column’ (p. 384). Gilbert and Gubar (1979) note that ‘where Brochlehurst had removed Jane from the imprisonment of Gateshead only to immure her in a dark valley of starvation, and even Rochester had tried to make her ‘slave of passion’, St. John wants to imprison the ‘resolute wild thing’ that is her soul in the ultimate cell, the ‘iron shroud’ of principle’ (p. 366). St. John offers Jane the opportunity to be consumed not by Bertha’s fire of self-indulgence but by the fire of martyrdom through self-negation. She resists his offer, insisting that she go with him as his sister, comrade but not as his wife. As his comrade she would be ‘free’. ‘But as his wife […] forced to keep the fire of my nature continually low, to compel it to burn inwardly and never utter a cry, though the imprisoned flame consumed vital after vital – this would be unendurable’(p. 398). The use of words such as ‘forced’, ‘compel’ and ‘imprisoned’ underlines that what St. John proposes is a violation of her psychic privacy as she will be compelled to keep silent like the confined Bertha whose
passions consume her prison with fire. Moreover, his mode of transcendence, requiring solitary exile, has its end, like that of Helen, in death while Jane’s longings are deeply social, directed towards companionship: a knowledge of ‘worlds, towns’, desire for ‘more intercourse with my kind’ (p. 116).

In her struggle with St. John where his ‘persuasion’ ‘contract(s) around’ her like an ‘iron shroud’ (p. 394), she is rescued by a voice that calls her name – not a supernatural one but ‘the voice of a human being – a known, loved, well-remembered voice – that of Edward Rochester […]. I am coming! I cried. ‘Wait for me!’(p. 409). Rochester's call can be read as Jane's unconscious, protecting her from entering a loveless marriage. This moment of telepathic communication is a manifestation of the ideal transcendence that Jane longs for, a face-to-face communication without the impediment of custom, conventionalities, or even mortal flesh. Her determination to answer Rochester’s cry is represented as an act of self-defence and of resistance; she silences St. John and orders him to leave her alone, interposing a barrier between her and him: ‘My powers were in play and in force […]. I desired him to leave me […] he obeyed at once’ (p. 410). The barriers between her and Rochester vanish with the symbolic and literal death of Bertha. Thus, from a communion that is based on ‘homelessness, lovelessness and subjugation’ (Eagleton, 1975, p. 21), she is rescued by a communion that is based on equality, love and domestic communion for which she has been searching.

Villette

Villette (1854), Bronte's final and most eccentric novel, is replete with libidinal desires, ghosts and hidden conspiracies that curtail Lucy’s agency. Lucy remembers a moment during a storm which makes her more vital and alive. She holds that ‘the tempest took hold of me with tyranny: I was roughly roused and obliged to live’ (p. 107). What underlines these lines is that Just as Lucy is forced to repress her passionate nature, she is obliged to liberate her passion in the storm: ‘I could not go in: too resistless was the delight of staying with the wild hour, black and full of thunder […] too terribly glorious’ (p. 107). However, she fears that ‘aliveness’ as giving in to passion is incompatible with the alien society she inhabits. She says, ‘I long achingly, then for four-and-twenty hours afterwards, for something to fetch me out of my present existence’ (p. 212). This duality of Lucy’s active and passionate inner nature and external passivity is further highlighted by Bronte’s allusion to the biblical story of Sisera and Jael – allusion that reveals how intense the struggle that occurs between Lucy's passion and repression. Unlike Sisera that Jael kills, Lucy’s feelings and passions ‘did not die: they were but transiently stunned, and at intervals would turn on the nail with a rebellious wrench’ (p. 134).

Bronte complicates Lucy's character through her use of theatricality; Lucy is aware that she is playing a role, noting that she has ‘two lives-the life of thought, and that of reality’. The latter being concerned with ‘daily bread, hourly work, and a roof
of shelter’ and the former with ‘the strange necromantic joys of fancy’ (p. 94). As aspects of ‘the life of reality’, the Junta that wall Lucy up represent the economic, social and educational institutions of Villette. The members of this Junta play roles as figures in the social world with which Lucy interacts and in which she must find a place and roles in her psychomachia. Their double roles underline that Lucy ‘has internalised the very maxims that restrict her development’ (Silver, 1992, p. 87). The prime figure of the Junta, Madame Beck, the director of the convent, is an internal force that hinders Lucy’s self-expression as she is an embodiment of reason severed from imagination. Gilbert and Gubar (1979) argue that ‘Beck is a symbol of repression, the projection and embodiment of Lucy’s commitment to self-control’ (p. 408). In Lucy’s inner world, it is imagination that longs for transcendence and self-expression and reason that hinders her transcendence. ‘But if I feel may I never express?’, Lucy asks herself, ‘Never!’, declared Reason’ (p. 287). Like the red room in which Jane is confined, the convent is both Lucy’s inner psychic space – ‘the house of her own self’ (Gilbert and Gubar, 1979, p. 408) – and an alien society that intrudes on her psychic privacy. Earning a living at Beck’s convent means subjection to endless intrusion of a ‘Jesuit inquisitress’ who ‘glides ghost-like through the house watching and spying everywhere’ (p. 90) in order to snoop through Lucy’s possessions. Lucy’s inner world, like the convent, is haunted by reason that always intrudes on her affairs: ‘the doors of my heart would shake, bolt and bar would yield, Reason would leap in’ (p. 317). This representation of Beck as an internal force that hinders Lucy’s self-expression and an external spy of an alien society that intrudes on her is pointed out by Eagleton’s remark:

To allow passionate imagination premature rein is to be exposed, vulnerable and ultimately self-defeating: It is to be locked in the red room […] passion springs from the very core of the self and yet is hostile, alien, invasive; the world of the internal fantasy must be therefore locked away […]. The inner world must yield of necessity to the practical virtues of caution, tact, and observation […] the wary, vigilant virtues by which the self’s lonely integrity can be defended in a spying, predatory society’ (Eagleton, 1975, p. 17).

Lucy’s emotional needs are incompatible with her social and economic reality that is Beck who locks Lucy up and school her character by a system of restraint and control. Therefore, Lucy’s repression stems from her recognition of the need to confront and control what she cannot realistically gain: ‘To act out her emotional needs […] might well threaten the economic and social security she achieves by ruthless, if painful, self-control’ (Silver, 1992, p. 97). Against Beck’s prying, Lucy is, therefore, forced to hide her passion as an act of self-defence which makes its way even into her narrative style: ‘I, Lucy Snow, plead guiltless of that curse, an overheated and discursive imagination’ (p. 14). Here, Lucy disclaims the passionate expressions of emotion enacted by Polly, perceiving that such strong emotions may find no outlet in the world and may hinder her power to survive. In this sense, Lucy does not want to lay herself open to rejection by a world to which she cannot fully belong. However,
the danger of repression is revealed in Pere Silas and Walravens, ‘the malicious villains of a Gothic tale in which she and Paul are cast as helpless victims’ (Moglen, 1992, p. 22).

Lucy encounters the temptation of privation, of retreat from desire that is Lucy’s spiritual energy, her agent of transcendence through her encounter with Père Silas, the Catholic, Jesuit priest. Père Silas gives voice to Lucy’s worst fears: that, for the ‘class of nature’ to which she belongs, ‘the world […] has no satisfaction’ (p. 200), and so it is better to denounce the desire for transcendence than to be continually frustrated: ‘A mind so tossed can find repose but in the bosom of retreat’ (p. 200). Therefore, Père Silas represents Lucy with the view that St. John presents to Jane that ‘this world is not the scene of fruition’ (p. 382). Lucy encounters this temptation in her visit to Walravens who secludes herself in a hidden apartment behind a secret door which hides the real nature of the conventual life into which Justine Marie was forced by Walravens. Père Silas calls the dead nun Paul’s ‘beloved saint’ (p. 488), but in the ‘lectures pieuses’ – ‘tales of moral martyrdom inflicted by Rome’ – ‘saints’ lives are ‘nightmares of oppression, privation, and agony’ (p. 143). Therefore, the dangers of repression as a remedy for the escape from desire are made plain in the portrait of the nun – portrait that reveals ‘inactive passions, acquiescent habits’ (p. 490). Before Lucy can discern Walravens who is revealed to be Justine Marie’s mother, she perceives her as a vague ‘obstruction’ that is of money interests. She prevents the union of Justine Marie and Paul because he was not rich. Madame Beck would repeat the project undertaken by Madame Walravens that of burying Paul’s affection; her hope is to confine Lucy within the walls of her convent for she ‘sees in Lucy’s bid to marry M. Paul a threat to the economic […] interests on which her establishment is founded’ as Lucy will establish a rival school (Jacobus, 1992, p.125).

As Rochester stimulates Jane, Paul sparks Lucy to growth and arouses her spirit. Lucy tells us that ‘his mind was […] my library, and whenever it was opened to me, I entered bliss’ (p. 472). Paul liberates Lucy from the prison of self-enclosure by offering his communion and helps her to become known in Villette: ‘You are solitary and stranger, and have your way to make your bread to earn’ (p. 227). However, as Bertha is represented as the dark side of both Rochester and Jane, the nun is the hidden repressed self of Paul and Lucy. The nun is the ghost that haunts Paul, depriving him of present comfort for the sake of a passion that should have been buried; he devotes his passion to the dead: ‘it died in the past – in the present it lies buried – its grave is deep-dug, well-heaped, and many winters old’ (p. 433). Therefore, the Junta promote the sanctification of Paul’s past at the expense of his present by keeping his lost love alive in his memory as a means, paradoxically, of keeping his passion buried.

As the hidden self of Lucy, the nun is ‘the spectre of repression’ (Jacobus, 1992, p. 131). The nun is the alien self of Lucy that is born out of the economic, religious and educational oppressive institutions that are of reason divorced from imagination, for ‘reason is really repressive witchcraft or image magic that would transfer her into a nun (none)’ (Gilbert and Gubar, 1979, p. 436). However, the
‘deco[y]ing’ of Lucy ‘into the enchanted castle’ (p. 489) to see the picture of Justine Marie as an attempt to separate her from Paul liberates her will and results in her rebellion: ‘Was the picture of a pale dead nun to rise, an internal barrier?’ (p. 499). This question underlines not only Lucy’s perception of the nun as a barrier between her and Paul, but it also signals the end of Lucy’s collusion with the internal forces that would bury her as she, like that of the storm, has ‘been obliged to live’ (p. 134).

Lucy’s escape from the convent, the prison of repression, is manifested in her waiting for an interview with Paul: ‘All that evening I waited’ (p. 557). Her waiting is represented as an act of resistance and defiance. She is violating ‘rules I had never forgotten or disregarded before’ (p. 558). Beck announces that ‘the rule of the house has […] been transgressed too long’ (p. 558). Lucy’s refusal to paralyze herself is a rejection of an alien other internalized as an aspect of herself that is Beck who represents the dangers of much calm and emotional paralysis – ‘you envenom and you paralyze’ (p. 559). Lucy tells her. Imagination, the old foe of reason in Lucy’s psychomachia, is set free to urge her out of the convent: ‘Look forth and view the night! Was her cry’ (p. 562). Lucy’s flight of imagination (like that of Jane) is socially directed; she looks out from her room not to the solitude of nature but to the city of Villette and its communal life. Lucy fulfils her complete liberation from the walls of repression by destroying the spectral version of herself: ‘I had rushed on the haunted couch; nothing leaped out, or sprang, or stirred; all the movement was mine, so was all the life’ (p. 587). The fact that the nun has no life, no substance reflects the junta’s project of rendering Lucy spectral. As Johnson says, ‘Lucy is here treading on more than the flimsy props of a silly hoax; she is rending the whole fabric of make-believe that has swathed her private world of privacy’ (Johnson, 1966, p. 335). Lucy’s destruction of the nun is a moment of psychological triumph over the spectre of repression and the barrier between her and Paul.

Paul’s passion is also released from the grave: ‘She looks the resurrection of the flesh’, says Lucy, ‘and that she is risen ghost’ (p. 580). The original Justine Marie has stood for Paul’s loss and the danger that he will never be able to lose his loss that will always ‘rise, an eternal barrier’ to prevent love. But this is Justine Marie Saviour: emblem of the revival of M. Paul’s capacity for love saved from from burial. He leads her out of the convent to the city of Villette where she establishes her own school. However, the Junta succeed in the end to separate Lucy from Paul as he makes his last journey in Justine Marie’s service. Lucy tells us that ‘M. Emanuel was away three years. Reader, they were the three happiest years of my life’ (p. 183). Waiting for Paul’s return, Lucy is the embodiment of the angel in the house: she says ‘my school flourishes, my house is ready; I have made him a little library, filled its shelves […] and cultivated out of love for him the plants he preferred’ (474). Despite Paul’s absence, Lucy overcomes silence, repression and claustrophobic spaces, accepting herself and developing a sense of optimism.
Conclusion

Bronte’s *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* consider the conflation of romance and realism that depict the realities of suffering and pain in the contexts of woman’s life. In *Villette*, the gothic drama of Lucy is set in a social context while in *Jane Eyre*, it depicts the psychological development of the heroine. This presentation is manifested in the shift in titles from Jane Eyre, the name of the heroine to *Villette*, the name of the alien world where Lucy manages to make a home. Even though the events of Jane Eyre take place in different places, the main focus is on the gothic world of Thornfield and the existence of Bertha as the dark side of both Jane and Rochester. In both novels, the heroines’ transcendence ends not with dreamy romantic expansion into spiritual melody but with an impetus to earthly matters and common sense; their modes of transcendence, despite the heated hymns of imagination, is deeply social directed towards companionship and amounts in the end to communion with one special person. Whereas Jane attains a fortune, a home, a marriage, Lucy attains a job, a house in a foreign city, and three years correspondence with a lover who is thousands of miles away and never comes back.

Works Cited


