

Five British Writers

Day 22
(of 28)



Textual Structure

“I thought of Helen Burns” (266) Ch. 21*

Resurgam at last?

As opposed to more immediately fulfilled promises:

The penultimate chapter of the first volume:

“I’ll explain all this some day” (159) Ch. 14*

Last chapter:

“I rose as soon as day dawned” (172) Ch. 15

*The fulfillment of these promises were among the most shocking aspects of the novel when first received:

Ch. 15 (160-5) “The matter-of-fact way in which she, a girl of nineteen...receives his revelations of his former life, is both revolting and improbable” James Lorimer, *North British Review* XI (1849): 475-93 (note on 515 of your edition)

Ch. 21 (269) Dismay at reading “a deathbed of unrepentant sin described with as deliberate a minuteness and as severe a tranquillity as a naturalist might display in recording the mortal orgasms [death throes] of a jelly-fish” (*Christian Remembrancer* June 1848, cited in notes 519)

Closure at Gateshead

- How does Jane ‘throw the book back’ at John Reed and his family in Chapter 21?
“The inanimate objects were not changed: but the living things had altered beyond recognition” (256)
- How does the structure at Moor House/Morton resemble earlier household structures?

Small Group Discussions

- Bird imagery

Rochester repeatedly refers to Jane as caged bird (284, ch 23; 349, 357 ch 27)

Jane herself compares herself with birds (360, at the end of ch 27)

- Child imagery

Jane repeatedly dreams of children and discusses the meaning of such dreams (248, ch 21; 315-6, ch 25) She also uses a child as a metaphor (“I strangled a new-born agony—a deformed thing which I could not persuade myself to own and rear—and ran on” (274, ch 22); “like a suffering child in a cold cradle” 331, near end of ch 26)

- Moon imagery

Rochester’s Moon story told to Adela (299-300, ch 24) (referring to 275, ch 22)

The Moon that brings Jane’s ‘mother’ (358, near end of ch 27)

- The Thornfield garden as a significant place, especially the chestnut tree

Chapter 23’s opening (278), the tree’s destruction at close of ch 23 (287-8), Jane’s visit to the tree in ch 25 (309-10)

The Bride and Prejudice in *Jane Eyre* Or, why do 'creoles' scare English readers?

Jamaica is a British colony at the time the novel is set. The native black Jamaican population outnumbers the colonizing white population about 12/1.

White slave owners often forced slave to be their concubines, resulting in a large population of mixed race children.

In the 19th c. the term *creole*, used by Rochester to describe both Bertha and her mother, could apply to either race. But Rochester describes his wife as inheriting her traits from a mad, lecherous, and drunken, *creole* mother—these traits are among the most common false stereotypes about the black population of the islands in the 19th c. (Bertha is a “savage” with “red eyes”)

In 1846, when the novel is published, the full emancipation of British West Indian slaves is only eight years old—it was declared in 1834 and only fulfilled in 1838.

Some scholars suggest that Bertha's rebellious attacks after being locked up in the attic could represent the slave uprisings/revolts that the Jamaican colonizers feared.

Does this background give new meaning to Jane's references to herself as a “revolted slave”?

In what ways are Jane and Bertha seen as parallel? Is there another character who suggests Bertha's image?



Imperialism and *Jane Eyre*

Does Bertha incarnate a historical crime? What does that do to our view of Rochester and romance plot?

Where else might we look to find Brontë's attitude about British imperialism?

Certain images appear rather negative:

The uncle in Madeira is looked down upon as a 'wine' merchant--Madeira was also one of the three most frequent spots of slave trade stop-overs.

The unlikable Lady Ingram wears Eastern clothing and represents this impulse, which Jane mocks: "a crimson velvet robe, and a shawl turban of some gold-wrought Indian fabric, invested her (I suppose she thought) with a truly imperial dignity."

What are the characters' attitudes (Rochester, Jane, St. John)?

Jane appears to defend Bertha (339, ch 27).

Rochester speaks of himself as an "india-rubber ball" uses a phrase "a man and a brother" (followed significantly by "or father, or master, or what you will") at the close of ch 14 (158).

Rochester uses many Eastern 'other' allusions in dressing Jane for the wedding (see ch 24 301-2)

Rochester's impression of Jamaica—dripping pineapples and pomegranates mixed with stinking black sulphur streams (underside of exoticism)—juxtaposes Jamaica with the "fresh" breeze of Europe (347) in ch 27.

Is the exotic realm a paradise or a hell?

Rochester's idea of an 'unhealthy' foreign atmosphere echoes the 'geographies of disease' developing at this time. Yet Rochester ultimately offers Jane a life together in exotic locals where they can live free of stricter English conventions in ch 27.

How does Rochester's attitude to 'other' peoples and spaces compare with St. John's?

Reading Jane Eyre Today

- What is disturbing about Jane's repeated refusals to eat?
- What is disturbing about the relationship between Rochester and Jane?
- What is disturbing about Jane's insistence that she is not a beggar?

Next Class: the end of Jane Eyre

Seeing and Sightless Eyes

Read and post a question!

Finish essay work!

Any questions on the essay due Tuesday?