

What the Heroine Does with Words: Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*

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With the phrase 'the madwoman in *Jane Eyre*', most of us will first recall Bertha Mason. In a different, and less conventional way, however, we find textual references which associate the adjective 'mad' with the heroine, Jane Eyre, especially with young Jane in the red room. The grown-up Jane still retains this sensitivity as her disposition and possesses an unusual intuition, extraordinary foresight and a talent in drawings. We also notice the frequent appearance of the moon as Jane's ally, mentor and even mother despite its connotation of madness often seen in folklore and mythology. There are striking analogies between Jane and Bertha, who is acknowledged fully as a madwoman throughout the novel. How, then, does the heroine escape the label of a mad person? How is the heroine's transition from a helpless sensitive girl into a mature sensible woman related to her great verbal performance?

1

John Reed is right when he threatens Jane, "you have no business to take our books; you are a dependent, mamma says; you have no money; your father left you none; you ought to beg, and not live here with gentlemen's children like us" (8).¹⁾ Jane is the odd one out at Gateshead Hall as a poor orphan fed by Aunt Reed, and as one of the Reed family on her father's side. As Eagleton points out, however, thanks to this adversity, Jane is free to design her own life. Unlike Rochester, who was coerced by his father into a marriage of convenience with Bertha, Jane gains the liberty of free marriage by breaking ties with the Reed family and releasing herself from the power-bond of her

relatives.²⁾ The only weapon left to the friendless and penniless Jane in the processes of self-realization is her tongue, her speech acts.

The incipit of the novel begins with Jane's rebellion by speaking out. Assailed by her cousin John Reed for reading one of his books, young Jane talks back to him, comparing him to the cruel Roman emperors. Her action has, in this phase, however, only destructive effects, for it brings her to the confinement to the red room. But then, her terrible fit in the room leads to the visit of the apothecary, Mr. Lloyd. Although ten-year-old Jane cannot achieve an eloquent explanation about what she has experienced there, she endeavors to tell him of her "unhappiness":

How much I wished to reply fully to this question! How difficult it was to frame any answer. Children can feel, but they cannot analyse their feelings; and if the analysis is partially effected in thought, they know not how to express the result of the process in words. Fearful, however, of losing this first and only opportunity of relieving my grief by imparting it, I, after a disturbed pause, contrived to frame a meagre, though, as far as it went, true response (19).

This speech prompts the apothecary to propose to Mrs. Reed that Jane should go away from Gateshead for school. This is the first success Jane attains with her own tongue in developing her life. Jane's first verbal rebellion has a destructive effect first, yet then a constructive effect.

This first success performed by an act of speech encourages Jane to another one; Jane asks Mrs. Reed what Uncle Reed would say if he were alive. Her threat reveals a good part of the power-mechanism in

Gateshead: the unexpected speech by Jane has enough power to horrify Aunt Reed and, at the same time, indicates that Jane's present calamity is caused by nothing but the absence of the powerful voice of dead Uncle Reed, which would control his wife's harsh treatment towards Jane. Aunt Reed has been given power over Jane in the deprivation of her husband's word and authority. Here Jane mimics John Reed who has threatened her with the subjunctive: 'if my mother ceased to feed you, you'd be a complete outcast'. This anticipates the repressive and exclusive power of language and the powerlessness caused by the absence of an authoritative voice explicit in later events. Jane's verbal rebellion against Aunt Reed half succeeds and half fails: shocked as she is, Aunt Reed invalidates Jane's utterance in boxing both her ears and leaving her without a word; the invalidation of Jane's speech shows her disregard for Jane's presence. Then she attacks Jane together with Brocklehurst in the reprisal, but Jane rebels again. In retrospect, this rebellion seems to have failed: Mrs. Reed is certainly horrified by Jane's unusual passion and starts to placate highly excited Jane, but the humiliation branded on the aunt ends up in her hindering Jane's reception of the fortune left by John Eyre. In Austin's term, Jane's threat to John Reed and Mrs. Reed could be expressed as follows: although the locutionary and the illocutionary act of Jane's utterance have functioned, the perlocutionary act Jane had intended has failed.⁽⁹⁾

The speech in the novel functions as signs and tokens of human personalities that determine and influence the way the heroine constructs the relationships with other characters. Young Jane has, if not strong, at least some attachment to the nurse Bessie for her "remarkable knack of narrative"(24). At Lowood, Jane almost forgets about her most important friend, Helen in her sickbed, and shares most of her time with Mary Ann Wilson who has, like Bessie, "a turn for narrative"(68). Jane prefers those who have talents in storytelling, and with whom she can have lively conversations, but there exists a rating among them. For example, on arrival at the Thornfield Hall, Jane rejoices that she has a companion to converse with, Mrs. Fairfax, who herself has been missing an

equivalent to talk to; but before long she begins to seek "more of intercourse with [her] kind"(95). Soon the top rating is occupied by Rochester.

Jane judges people's personalities from what and how they talk; if or not the judgement is valid, she certainly depends on it. That explains well why Jane can keep composure while she observes Rochester and Blanche Ingram enjoying their conversation. However her beauty seems to varnish over her personality, Jane finds out that her personality is as superficial as her language: she despises her elders, she just repeats phrases from books, etc. Jane is even certain that her behavior will not be able to draw real attention from Rochester. When Jane first meets Richard Mason, Bertha's brother, unlike other ladies who pay attention to his good looks, only Jane tells from his way of speaking something "not precisely foreign, but still not altogether English"(167). When she watches Diana and Mary Rivers through the window in Marshend, their conversation as well as appearances interest her so much that she has "half-forgotten [her] own wretched position"(294). As for St. John, Jane dimly perceives his dark passion from his sermons. And when she first exchanges some words with him, she thinks that she has "learnt more of him than in the whole previous month" (313).

If Jane judges people from their speech, how is Jane judged by people? Is she judged from her speech, too? This question may be answered immediately in the positive. On her death bed, Mrs. Reed remembers: "I declare she talked to me once like something mad, or like a fiend — no child ever spoke or looked as she did" (203). Rochester has his own image of Jane's way of talking: when they reunite after a few months' separation due to Jane's stay at Gateshead, he receives from Jane the answers to his questions and then declares, "A true Janian reply!" (215). The Rivers family, despite Jane's exhausted and neglected appearance after her wandering, find Jane an educated person "by her manner of speaking"(298). Astonished by her too frank a manner of speech, St. John judges her as "original" and "not timid" (330). The elegant guests at Thornfield Hall presume that Jane cannot understand the term 'playing charades' (in fact, she cannot). Here,

an interesting asymmetry in the power structure is seen: they do not judge Jane by her manner of speaking but they first judge her from her position and guess if she shares the same range of vocabulary. Certainly for them, a poor governess deserves no special attention, whereas Jane needs to judge people to behave herself as well as possible among them. How does Jane herself esteem people's judgements of her by her speech? We see that she highly respects the importance of words: asked by Rochester when she will return from the visit to Gateshead, she will not make any promise as far as there is a possibility she might break her word.

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The most important type among Jane's speech acts in the development of the plot is self-explanation and self-defense. The first successful self-explanation and defense is achieved to Miss Temple and Helen. Wrongly accused by Brocklehurst, Jane takes no action, as if she were completely helpless. Miss Temple then tells her that she should not only be crying but defend herself in words:

'Well, now, Jane, you know, or at least I will tell you, that when a criminal is accused, he is always allowed to speak in his own defense. You have been charged with falsehood; defend yourself to me as well as you can. Say whatever your memory suggests as true; but add nothing and exaggerate nothing.'

I resolved, in the depth of my heart, that I would be most moderate — most correct; and, having reflected a few minutes in order to arrange coherently what I had to say, I told her all the story of my sad childhood. Exhausted by emotion, my language was more subdued than it generally was when it developed that sad theme; and I infused into the narrative far less of gall and wormwood than ordinary. Thus restrained and simplified, it sounded more credible: I felt as I went on that Miss Temple fully believed me (62).

For the first time, Jane tastes the victory of gaining compassion and understanding from the audience by

telling a story. Thereafter Jane starts to work hard and improve herself. This episode is a milestone in her transition from childhood to adulthood.

The more she learns how to control her speech, the more she becomes mature and powerful. Now let us focus on the development of her personality in terms of Jane's control over her own speech. The traumatic red room episode shows that young Jane possesses no ability to verbalize the perceptions of the strange light and is suffering from her own dread. Unlike the grown-up Jane who receives telepathy and takes a prompt action, in the red room, young Jane, too young to articulate what is happening around her, "wiped [her] tears and hushed [her] sobs" in order not to wake up some "preternatural voice" (13). Jane must silence her own voice in order to silence a preternatural voice. Not only the Reed's but also Jane herself represses her voice, for owning her own voice is something which will end up punitively. The inability to verbalize things around her makes her a frantic and maddening child: if she had explained why she became so nervous in the red room, she would not have been considered as a mad child; furthermore, if she had been able to verbalize what she had seen in the room, she would not have been so nervous. Her language is still buried and absorbed in that of others', so however great her anger about the cruel treatment is, she eventually believes what others say to be true: "All said I was wicked and perhaps I might be so..."(13), "I had felt every word [of Brocklehurst] as acutely as I had heard it plainly..." (31), (after her rebellion) "I would fain exercise some better faculty than that of fierce speaking..."(32).

Young Jane is, as it were, forbidden to talk, to be talked to and to be talked about, besides she is not only forbidden but also forbidding. The first spoken discourse in the novel begins with Jane's question: "What does Bessie say I have done?" This is replied to by Aunt Reed not with an answer but with words that invalidate Jane's speech act itself: "Jane, I don't like cavillers or questioners: besides, there is something truly *forbidding* in a child taking up her elders in that manner. Be seated somewhere; and until you can speak pleasantly, remain silent" [my emphasis] (5). If they question, the adults do not really expect any proper

answers from Jane: their questions do not function as such but as repressive utterances such as threat, order, complain and request. That is obvious not only in Jane's exchange with Aunt Reed but also in the long interrogation of Brocklehurst about Jane's religious views. How do they, then, respond to the request issued by Jane? Aunt Reed does not even give a refusal to Jane's urgent and earnest request to let her out of the red room, but just nullifies it with the blunt word, "Silence!"(14). At Gateshead Jane is considered to deserve no real verbal communication such as questions and answers or explanations, and therefore she is not only silenced but also threatened with silent violence as John Reed and Aunt Reed hit her without any words or cause.

We see here that Jane is shut up doubly: she is confined in the red room and bereft of tongue. For Jane to be shut up ultimately implies death: she threatens Aunt Reed, "they [Uncle Reed and Jane's parents] know how you shut me up all day long, and how you wish me dead" (23). In fact, Aunt Reed not only wishes Jane dead but makes Jane virtually so by an act of speech, a letter replying to John Eyre's inquiry about Jane's whereabouts. If lack of love is explicit in the invalidation of the speech act such as questions to and about Jane, John Eyre's inquiry shows his kindness towards Jane. Aunt Reed, however, relentlessly invalidates the favorable speech act towards Jane, too. She taboos the existence of Jane in tabooing any speech with and about her, as we see her order her son, "Don't talk to me about her [Jane]" (22). John Reed is well aware of the tabooed position of Jane and cunningly threatens her, saying, "Won't I tell mamma?"(9). Even on her death bed, Mrs. Reed, if she recognizes her, does not acknowledge the young woman beside her as Jane. This denial process is repeated again and again in the novel, especially against Bertha, this time by Jane herself.

The condition under which Jane does not know how to 'do things with words' but only to be forced to remain silent is the most miserable state for her: "my worst ailment was an unutterable wretchedness of mind: a wretchedness which kept drawing from me silent tears"(16). Nevertheless Jane crosses the threshold into

the world of language when she steps out of the red room, as Bessie is surprised to see how she "has got quite a new way of talking"(34). In her case, the process of learning how to speak is nothing but that of becoming an adult with a certain power. Of course she is still too young, for instance, to know the meaning of 'Lowood Institution', or to know how to abstain from too many questions to Helen, or how to narrate her sad story of Gateshead without fierce anger to convince Helen about Jane's justice and the Reed's injustice. After her first success in telling her story to redeem her honor, however, Jane rapidly moves towards maturity.

The evolutionary and formative process parallels Jane's acquisition of French. I am in agreement with Tanner's opinion that what Jane learns in the first French lesson is the verb 'être' — 'I am', 'I will be' and 'I was' and this is exactly what she has to learn to say with full confidence and authority.⁽⁴⁾ Boumelha points out, too, that the initials of Jane Eyre are J.E., 'je', 'I'.⁽⁵⁾ Although Tanner seems to emphasize the development of the heroine's identity, I would rather lay emphasis on the development of not only her identity but also her empowerment through an appropriate manner of speaking. In other words, although English is her mother tongue, she must learn how to make the most of it as if she learned a foreign language.

The detailed description of the process of Jane's acquirement of 'English' is omitted in the text, for, after she narrates Helen's death in chapter 9, the narrating-Jane opens chapter 10 with an abrupt declaration that she is going to "pass a space of eight years" and shows the reader the grown-up heroine. Instead of the curious and perhaps frustrated reader, Bessie observes how Jane has been improved and tells it: now she looks like a lady and can play the piano, draw, read and speak French and embroider. Moreover, there exists no such uneasiness in their conversation as existed in Jane's childhood: Jane can 'speak pleasantly' now. If Gateshead stages the beginning of the articulated, verbalized world and Lowood presents the great apprenticeship, then Thornfield shows her using the outstanding speech ability in practice. As Jane can communicate with Adèle in French without any

difficulty Mrs. Fairfax has, so she commands her 'English', too.

Jane's command of the tongue includes even the appropriate use of silence. Although she used to be silenced and ignored in Gateshead and Lowood, now in Thornfield she is the one who utilizes silence in a most effective way in order to protect herself and develop her life: silence sometimes speaks more than words and is one of language usages. For example, she refrains from questioning too much about the secrets of the Rochester family. Ordered to speak something by Rochester in their second interview, she chooses to be silent rather than to show herself stupid by pretending to know things. As a result, Rochester grants her reticence so great credit that he lets her take care of the injured Richard Mason. With this event, Rochester and Jane develop their friendship by sharing a secret and become accomplices; finally he chooses Jane not only as his accomplice but also as his wife.

We have examined how Jane transforms from a helpless child with no means of the articulation of things and self-expression into a mature person with a great command of 'English'. Here lies the great secret how a plain, poor and inexperienced governess can allure an experienced gentleman much older than herself. This would make a marked contrast with Rochester's mistresses and especially with his wife, Bertha: however attractive they were, he might not have enjoyed with them, all non-English speakers, the subtlest wit of the English language as he does now with Jane.

The only 'misfire' happens at the interrupted wedding, but it is not because of the inefficiency of Jane's speech act but because of the infelicity of an attempt at bigamy.⁶⁰ Even when the marriage is interrupted and the secret revealed and Jane decides to leave Rochester, in the deepest despair Jane loses neither good judgement nor the command of the language and succeeds in calming down overly excited Rochester who was about to appeal to violence to stop her. At Marshend, she continues to control the world around her in controlling her language: although she is so exhausted after the harsh wandering she never betrays her identity, telling them a false name. Unlike

young Jane, the grown-up Jane who now knows how to 'speak pleasantly' is loved by Mrs. Fairfax, Rochester, Adèle, the Rivers family, Rosamond Oliver, the students of Morton and the village people.

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Jane is not only good at verbal communication with others but also communicative with herself: Jane often has dialogues with herself at critical moments of her life. The interlocutor of the dialogue seems her 'reason' or something similar. For example, wronged by John Reed, she ejaculates: "Unjust! — unjust!" said my reason"(12). Hearing about the possibility of the marriage of Rochester and Miss Ingram, "Reason having come forward and told in her own quiet way, a plain, unvarnished tale" and she start to reproach herself calling herself 'you': " 'You,' I said, 'a favorite with Mr. Rochester?' " (140). In Morton she tries to justify her action of having left Rochester in the form of dialogue: "...let me ask myself one question — Which is better? — To have surrendered to temptation; ...or to be a village schoolmistress, free and honest" (316). On the way back to Thornfield after the long stay in Marshend, she hits upon the idea of getting information about Rochester from the hotel keeper in the form of dialogue with "the monitor" (372).

In all these dialogues with her 'reason', she is attempting to avoid the wrong way, to resist temptation, that is, to exclude 'madness'. The narrating-Jane narrates her as if she was fighting not to go beyond the boundary of sanity and insanity, and in her view the pair parallels respectively the way up to earthly happiness and the way down to unhappiness. Therefore, to believe that Rochester loves her more than Miss Ingram, or to yield to his temptation and become a virtual mistress of Rochester would be, in her term, an act of madness: "Yes; I feel now that I was right when I adhered to principle and law, and scorned and crushed the insane promptings of a frenzied moment" (316). Observing the heroine endeavoring to stick to the side of 'sanity' and to flee from 'insanity', readers are tempted to judge Jane as a person of great sense and sanity, not of sensibility and madness. Of course, it is a philosophical question as to whether we grant the

heroine to be sane because of her great efforts to overcome the temptations, or, on the contrary, grant her to be completely mad because she believes herself completely sane.

We could put the question of Jane's 'reason' and 'madness' at least as follows: if young Jane does not move completely from the world of chaos and 'madness' to the world of order and reason and if the grown-up Jane still retains traits that can be associated with madness, in the course of the transition from childhood to adulthood, she learned to tame and localize her 'madness' in the region of reason through the verbalization and articulation of it. Now she can master the fear of 'madness' in accepting and expressing it with words. If young Jane had not grown completely out of her 'mad' traits into a perfectly 'sane' person, she has, at least, learned how to accept and reconcile herself with them. Of course, the very process could be considered as nothing but the process of the transition from madness to sanity if we see everything that is put into words as *Logos*. However, it is not the philosophical question as such that I am concerned with in this study.⁷⁾

In any case, the verbalization and articulation of the world makes it possible for Jane to master what young Jane never could: fear of the supernatural. After receiving the telepathy, she recoils, for a moment, from the darkness of nature and shouts, "Down superstition!" (369). Here what she dreads is not the supernatural telepathy but her own imagination roused by superstition. Her affirmative attitude towards the telepathy operates, as a result, as a device for the oblivion of Jane's extreme disposition. Instead of asking whether she is mad or not, we place our wonder only upon the mystery and meaning of the telepathy.

However 'mad' the numerous dialogues with reason sound, the affirmative attitude towards the dialogue transmits to the reader somehow and prevents our direct association with Jane and 'madness'. We do not know clearly if this is performed by the older, hindsighted, narrating-Jane, but at least we do not see any traces of the grown-up Jane's suffering from the lack of ability to express her own feelings in words.

Here we should note that Jane cannot verbalize the

telepathy itself. Although she does not dread it too much, she cannot explain the telepathy:

I recalled that inward sensation I had experienced: for I could recall it, with all its unspeakable strangeness. I recalled the voice I had heard; again I questioned whence it came, as vainly as before: it seemed in me — not in the external world. I asked, was it a mere nervous impression — a delusion? I could not conceive or believe: it was more like an inspiration. The wondrous shock of feeling had come like the earthquake which shook the foundations of Paul and Silas's prison (371).

Although the call is too mysterious to understand, it is emphasized here that she is sane enough to question if it was only a delusion, one of her psychic workings. Moreover, the 'unspeakable' call is, in fact, treated here as a religious revelation. Here is another trick of showing the mystery of Jane's experience as something safe and acceptable: she cannot verbalize the mystery fully, not because she is mad, but because it is a religious, untouchable, thus unspeakable experience. In fact, after the interrupted marriage, Jane begins to utter the word 'God' much more often than before. Of course, quite a few religious motifs are put from the beginning into the text, for example, Brocklehurst's sermons. But Jane herself has turned into a more religious woman than before after the void wedding and the great calamity on the moor. Thus the problem of Jane's 'madness' depicted in her strange experience is displaced by that of a religious enigma; the question of Jane's unusual disposition is replaced by the impression of Jane as a special, chosen one. Her 'mad' side is justified in the name of religion.

2

So far, we have examined the outstanding characteristics of the heroine's speech act. Now let us look briefly at the speech acts of other characters. I believe that will vividly illuminate the relationship between them and the heroine, since their relations are constructed mainly through verbal communication.

Rochester, the dearest character to Jane, is allowed to defend himself more often than any other character in the novel. In other words, in the process of editing her story the narrating-Jane tends to put a good deal of his acts of self-defense into the text. For example, he explains to Jane how he comes to foster Adèle; in the speech he effectively calls Jane's name several times, which is repeated by the narrating-Jane towards the reader. Asked by Richard Mason to take good care of his sister, Bertha, Rochester insists that he has been and is doing his best about the matter. Although he orders his "pet lamb" (190), Jane, to nurse the injured Richard Mason in the room adjacent to Bertha's, he explains later that he never forgot to think about her security. Then he starts to tell the story of his past, in which great emphasis is put on the fact that what he has done is not a crime, but an unavoidable mistake so he is an unfortunate victim to be pitied.

When their marriage is interrupted and the secret revealed, he promptly assumes the offensive by justifying his innocence of the confinement of his wife and the attempt at bigamy, as if the fact that Bertha is mad functioned as an almighty indulgence and the husband who has a mad wife should be pitied and allowed any act. When Rochester later confesses to Jane about his inevitable marriage to and confinement of Bertha, he is very tactful in his own defense: "I should have appealed to your nobleness and magnanimity at first" (277). This shows that he believes that he can definitely gain her understanding only if he explains everything; in other words, he believes that he can easily win her compassion only if he appeals to her 'reason' because his actions were 'reasonable'.

As a result, Jane forgives and pities him immediately. Furthermore, although she is firmly resolved to leave Thornfield as soon as possible, she allows him to talk longer, she lets him defend himself. The narrating-Jane further re-presents the defense held in the narrated-time to the reader in great detail. Thereafter he does not appear again in the text until Jane finds him in Ferndean, where he is depicted as an unfortunate blind deformed man. The injury is, however, treated as the evidence of his heroic conduct to save his wife from the fire. Rochester directly shows

his thanks to God for the reunion with Jane although, like the blank eight years of Jane's transition to adulthood, the process of Rochester's remorse, if any, and transformation into a pious man is omitted in the text but taken for granted in Ferndean. In any case, with his miserable physical state and his transformation into a good man, Jane can easily forget his sin and crime, and so can the reader.

St. John makes a marked contrast with Rochester in the verbal intercourse with Jane. While Jane enjoys very pleasant and thrilling exchanges with Rochester, she cannot have any lively talk with St. John. St. John, in fact, appropriates Jane's voice and usurps her language. For example, when Jane recovers from the debility caused by the hunger and fatigue of her wandering on the moor, she soon decides to acquire a job to be independent and starts to ask St. John about it, but he interrupts her and begins to introduce the topic himself. He tells the story of Jane's life and forces her to listen to him to the end, however Jane pleads with him to stop it, where he usurps Jane's judgement of the events narrated too and criticizes Rochester whom he has never seen. He not only usurps her language but imposes his: he interrupts her learning German and imposes her instead the lesson of Hindostanee, deceiving her that he needs a help to improve his own Hindostanee. St. John's language always wears the color of the sermon he delivers in church so sounds almost like attempts to supervise people. This may explain why he does not marry Rosamond Oliver; he feels acutely that he will lose his superiority in her presence for his passionate affection towards her. It is unbearable for St. John to turn down the volume of his own voice, as her "gay voice, sweet as a silver bell" (319) interrupts his serious religious manifest to Jane.

Owing to the one-sidedness, verbal communication between St. John and Jane does not function properly; he not only usurps Jane's tongue and imposes his own but also invalidates the intercourse itself when inconvenient. For example, although he has told Jane's past, he is going to leave her without revealing the most important point, the fact of their blood relationship and her reception of a great inheritance. Refused in his request to accompany him to India, he misuses Jane's

spoken words and threats: "You have said you will go with me to India: remember — you have said that" (357). Refused again, he this time attempts to persuade her by blaming her "inappropriate" manner of speech: "I scarcely expected to hear that expression from you" (360); "Your words are such as ought not to be used: violent, unfeminine, and untrue" (363). St. John writes his own words into Jane from the beginning and prohibits all her free speech. As a result, Jane "could no longer talk or laugh freely when he was by"(350) and "must disown half [her] nature"(351) and "shuddered as he spoke: [she] felt his influence in [her] marrow — his hold on [her] limbs"(357).

Jane gradually gets enfeebled by his repeated attempts at persuasion:

[H]e had forgiven me for saying I scorned him and his love, but he had not forgotten the words; and as long as he and I lived he never would forget them. I saw by his look, when he turned to me, that they were always written on the air between me and him; whenever I spoke, they sounded in my voice to his ear; and their echo toned every answer he gave me (361).

Jane's obsession derives from the sense of guilt for her ingratitude towards one of her few cousins, and from her guilt at denial of the Christian order conveyed through St. John. However one-sided and repressive St. John's proposal is, it is true that his persistent requests are issued in the cause of a missionary, of spreading the word of God. Jane says at the very end of the novel, "His [word] is the exaction of the apostle, who speaks but for Christ" (398). It will not go too far if we think that St. John not only appropriates Jane's voice and 'imposes' the word of Christ on Jane but also appropriates the word of Christ, or at least, he tries to persuade Jane with the authority and in the name of Christ. It is then little wonder that he is named St. John: the word of God is to Christ, from Christ to the Apostles, from the Apostles to St. John and from him to Jane. Of course, to spread the word of Christ inevitably entails the process of understanding and interpreting it, then St. John must first master it to some extent.

In any case, St. John's authorized word is so powerful that Jane is about to accept his proposal, when she perceives the telepathy. Despite Jane's final rejection, St. John's power haunts the novel to the very end: the novel ends with the quotation of a passage from his letter, the praise of Jesus. In fact, the narrating-Jane confesses once, "I wish I could describe that sermon [delivered by St. John]; but it is past my power. I cannot even render faithfully the effect it produced on me" (309). Eagleton points out that the ending of the novel reflects the novel's uneasiness about the victory to which it brings Jane.⁶⁸ I would like to add a little more to this: on one hand, the narrating-Jane wishes to show great respect for St. John to mitigate the sense of guilt for her rejection, but on the other hand, St. John is, with his unshaken faith in God and the authority of Christianity, the one whose words the narrating-Jane is unable to represent/control/paraphrase.

This is to some extent also true of Helen Burns. Although she is the first friend of lonely Jane, the words exchanged between them show a narrow but unbridgeable gap between them. On the first encounter, Jane asks Helen many questions such as the meaning of the word 'Institution'; Helen refuses her in a rather cold way, "You ask rather too many questions. I have given you answers enough for the present: now I want to read"(44). The failed communication might depend on the fact that Jane is yet too young to know how to speak and Helen is older and more mature than Jane; in fact Helen has a lively conversation with Miss Temple. But when we come to think that her death forms the climax of the description of Lowood, we cannot ignore the fact that Jane can never establish such real intercourse with Helen as with Rochester. When they discuss the cruel treatment of the Reed's, Helen expresses her own religious faith as if she "wished no longer to talk to me [Jane], but rather to converse with her own thoughts"(51). Even in her attempt to comfort Jane, who is humiliated by Brocklehurst, Helen disapproves of Jane's opinion, saying "Hush, Jane!"(60).

It cannot be denied that there is a kind of discommunication between them since, if she talks, Helen is not really talking to Jane, but to herself or with

God within and she sometimes, like St. John, hushes Jane's voice. As a result, after her death Helen is not mentioned in the text except when Jane visits Gateshead to see the moribund Aunt Reed and ponders over death. But this pondering is soon shut off by Aunt Reed's voice before arriving at any concrete ideas. Jane is, as it were, linking Helen with death, and she represses the notion of death along with Helen. As Jane cannot communicate well with Helen in Lowood, so she cannot reconcile herself with death, either. Unlike Helen who wishes to die and rest in Heaven, Jane desires to survive on the earth so struggles with numerous difficulties armed with her only weapon, the tongue.

Finally let us consider Bertha's speech acts, or rather the absence of her voice. Bertha is placed in a very contradictory situation: she was judged by Rochester as mad by her way of speaking, yet she is bereft of it in the attic of Thornfield. Shortly after the marriage in the West Indies Rochester has recognized the possibility of Bertha's madness by her hollow speech, but now he considers her as not deserving any verbal communication. The text allows her no speech but phatic sounds such as moans, laughs and screams. The presentation of Bertha is always indirect in the text: her moans and laughs are heard through doors and walls; her appearance is seen in the reflection of a mirror. Even when she is seen directly after the interrupted marriage she is not spoken to by anybody. Although Rochester exchanges some words with Grace Poole, he ties Bertha up without any word and begins a long eloquent explanation of how the confinement was unavoidable and legitimate, as if she could not understand a word. Here Bertha is treated as if she did not deserve any verbal communication and with her any verbal communication was impossible from the beginning.

This neglect of Bertha's existence does not necessarily depend on her lack of the linguistic competence. In fact we do not know if she speaks or understands what others say: Richard Mason reports, "She [Bertha] sucked the blood: she *said* she'd drain my heart" [my emphasis], but Rochester warns not to "mind her gibberish"(187). This could suggest that Bertha might speak in some manner but Rochester

relentlessly reduces her speech to "gibberish". In any case she is forbidden to have any verbal intercourse, in Hite's words, she is outside the symbolic order.⁶⁹ She must die when she is, perhaps for the first time in many years, called directly by Rochester, "Bertha!". This forms a remarkable contrast with Jane's case; for Jane, her name is neither confidential nor tabooed but something positive, favorable and public. We hear her tell her name "Jane Eyre" in a clear, perhaps slightly triumphant way, many times in the novel when she is asked to tell her name by Mr. Lloyd, Brocklehurst, Rochester, and so on. The novel itself is entitled with her name: *Jane Eyre*. Above all, frightened as she is, she follows the mysterious call from Rochester, "Jane! Jane! Jane!"(369).

3

We have seen how Jane grows from a sensitive girl into a sensible woman with her great verbal performance and what characteristics the speech of Jane and other important characters have. Now I would like to conclude this study by pointing out two crucial functions of the speech in the whole text: the empowerment of the speaking person and the construction of relationships through verbal communication. The first day at Lowood portrays well the typical function of the speech as power: the teachers give orders and the students obey them automatically. Until the students are ordered to do something, they are not allowed to do anything voluntarily; they are not allowed any other act than what is ordered. For example, served disgusting meals, the students are disturbed but soon silenced by a teacher, since the act of complaining about poor meals is out of their daily routine. After the meal they start to complain about it because it is the time where "it seemed to be permitted to talk loud and more freely, and they used their privilege"(39).

Speech as privilege is the repeated theme in the novel, and naturally those who are most privileged can enjoy the greatest liberty of speech and own the loudest and best voices. When Rochester returns, the silent Thornfield regains "new voices" because now "it had a master"(103), and when he leaves, the Hall becomes

calm again. He has "a fine bass voice"(140) and Jane who is in love with him soon recognizes his voice among his guests. With the voice Rochester always gives Jane orders: on their first encounter Jane just follows Rochester's order and helps him ride his horse: in the first long conversation Rochester bluntly tells her, "Speak"(117) because the master has the right to allow one of his upper servants her voice. This permission to speak functions as a command at the same time: as an example, he orders Jane to tell him why she did not show herself in front of him and his guests so strongly that Jane cannot help shedding tears. Even in the disguise of a gypsy fortuneteller, he continues to exert his mighty power, interrogating her.

There is only one person who seems to have a voice as strong as his: Miss Ingram. The possibility of her marriage to Rochester grants her temporarily such a voice. In fact, her "very rich and powerful" (140) voice expresses her position as a rich and powerful lady very well. With the voice she asks Rochester to sing, and her request is granted instantly. Another person whose voice could produce some effect upon Rochester is Richard Mason. Because Mason shares the darkest secret of Rochester: one word of betrayal could be fatal to him. As the power of Richard Mason derives from his knowledge about the secret, anybody who shares it could be influential upon him: Rochester implies that Jane could ruin him if she betrayed the injury of Mason. Here we remember the same operation of tabooing and the threat with the taboo shown in John Reed's treatment of Jane: to mention a tabooed subject has a destructive power.

If Rochester has the most powerful voice as the master of the Hall, Bertha, who has no voice, naturally has no power. Not only Bertha but also those who are abhorred are often prohibited from speaking and forced into silence. To say nothing of young Jane at Gateshead and Lowood, Helen is also prohibited from talking from the beginning. She answers every difficult question about history yet receives, instead of praise, reprimand from the teacher. Adèle, who expresses her childlike expectation and pleasure at her presents, is hushed by Rochester relentlessly: " 'I have forbidden Adèle to talk to me about her presents' " (114). In this novel we can

measure the power a character has by observing his/her speech. When we come to consider, however, that every piece of speech is set into the narrating-Jane's narrative and writing, we are to consider her as the most powerful person in the novel.

The second important function of the speech in the novel is the construction of human relationships. The first dialogue between Jane and Rochester consists of only Rochester's questions. A few days later, Rochester nominates Jane as his companion for the evening, saying, "I am disposed to be gregarious and communicative to-night"(116). In the dialogue Rochester begins to tell of his unhappy past days, confessing that Jane is an excellent listener and therefore he can speak "almost as freely as if [he] was writing [his] thoughts in a diary"(119). In the third conversation he tells the story of Céline Varens' betrayal and he himself is surprised that he is almost enjoying telling of his failed romance to a young governess.

If Jane seems only to take the passive role of a listener and Rochester takes the active role to fill her blank with his mighty 'pen', this act of telling and listening is an interactive one.⁽¹⁰⁾ After Jane has listened to his story, in fact, she feels, "the blanks of existence were filled up; my bodily health improved and I gathered flesh and strength"(129). Peter Brooks acutely points out that in the dynamics of storytelling, the act of telling a story which includes the teller and the listener, the narrator and the narratee, resembles the process of a psychoanalytic discourse and often involves the situation of transference, an interactive phenomenon. So the tale told may represent an attempt at seduction, or even something close to rape and the link between teller and listener that produces the story is originally and ultimately an erotic bond.⁽¹¹⁾ While Rochester has an inexplicable desire to tell her his most personal story, Jane welcomes his seduction and in accepting the seduction she attains strength and energy. Quite predictably, they fall in love with each other.

On their dramatic reunion in Ferndean, this time Jane attempts to help him regain his strength by seducing and tantalizing him; she never gives him the whole answer to his question about her days in

Marshend. As Bodenheimer points out, Jane becomes the instrument for his care with the effect of the storytelling.¹¹² The frustration of the suspended story gives him an impetus to live and transforms him into what he used to be: communicative. Here it should be noted that Jane's voice becomes more and more powerful. Rochester recognizes Jane first by her voice, then by her hands. It is impossible for them to have physical communication since they are not yet married, or to have a visual intercourse since Rochester is blind now. The only way to communicate left for them is the verbal one. That is why Rochester dreads a shortest silence in their conversation so much, since now for him the voice is the only evidence of Jane's presence, existence and attentions to him. The narrating-Jane triumphantly tells the reader at the end of the novel, "To be together is for us to be at once as free as in solitude, as gay as in company. We talk all day long: to talk to each other is but a more animated and an audible thinking"(397). Thus Young Jane with no voice at the beginning of the novel gains the loudest voice in the end.

Notes

- (1) Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (NY & London: Norton,1987)
- (2) Terry Eagleton, *Myths of Power: A Marxist Study of the Brontës* (London: Macmillan, 1975) p.25.
- (3) J. L. Austin, *How to do things with words* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard U.P., 1962) p.101.
- (4) Tony Tanner, *Passion, Narrative and Identity in Wuthering Heights and Jane Eyre* in *The Brontë Sisters Critical Assessments, Vol. III.* ed. by Eleanor McNees (East Sussex: Helm Information,1996) p.296.
- (5) Penny Boumelha, *Jane Eyre* in *New Casebooks Jane Eyre*, ed. by Heather Glen (London: Macmillan, 1997) p.142.
- (6) See the scheme of 'infelicities', *How to do things with words*, p.18. Austin mentions the act of bigamy, see pp.16- 17.
- (7) Shoshana Felman discusses the overtly ambiguous notion of madness and its boundary blurred with that of philosophy in *Writing and Madness* (Ithaca: Cornell U.P., 1987) p.37.
- (8) *Myths of Power*, p.23.
- (9) Molly Hite, *The Other Side of the Story* (Ithaca: Cornell U.P., 1989) p.34.
- (10) Sandra Gilbert & Susan Guber, *The Madwoman in the Attic* (New Haven & London: Yale U.P.) pp.3- 7.
- (11) Peter Brooks, *Psychoanalysis and Storytelling* (Oxford UK & Cambridge USA: Blackwell) p.77, p.101.
- (12) Rosemarie Bodenheimer, *Jane Eyre in search of Her Story* in *Modern Critical Interpretations*, ed. by Harold Bloom (NY: Chelsea House, 1987) p.103.